



**STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. FELIPE PÉREZ ROQUE,
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA,
AT THE 4TH SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

GENEVA, 13 MARCH 2007

Excellencies:

First and foremost, and since Cuba is the current Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement, comprising 118 countries of which 27 are founding members of this Council, I would like to brief you on the results of the XIV Summit of the Movement in those areas of interest to this body, as well as on the further actions undertaken by the Movement in Geneva in the months following the gathering in Havana in September 2006.

In Havana, our Heads of State or Government rejected selectivity and double standards in the promotion and protection of human rights, as well as the attempts to use human rights as a pretext to pursue political goals. The legitimacy and credibility of the Human Rights Council will depend on this just demand by the Movement.

At the XIV Summit, the Heads of State or Government were emphatic in underscoring the need for the Council to facilitate the leveling of the right to development to all other human rights and fundamental freedoms and to promote the realization of the right to development as a priority. I would like to report today that Cuba will devote a sizable portion of its efforts at the helm of the Movement to overcoming the obstacles in their enjoyment and to integrating the right to development into all UN policies and programs.

In light of the decisions adopted in Havana, over the last few months the Movement has shown its ability to draw up and promote common positions on several key issues pertaining to the institutional establishment of the Council. A testament to that are our proposals on the Work Agenda, the Rules of Procedure for calling special sessions and the modalities for the Universal Periodic Review. We have also been working on preparing guidelines that may provide the basis for the establishment of the experts' body, in the denunciation procedure and in the work program for the various sessions of the Council every year.

In the elapsed period, the Movement also revitalized its activity at the Third Committee of the General Assembly. The traditional draft resolutions on the *Right to Development*, *the Strengthening of International Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights* and *Human Rights and Unilateral Coercive Measures* were updated and adapted with broad-based support.

Today, delegates, I would like to underscore the will and decision of the Non-Aligned Movement to work towards the establishment of a real international system for the protection of human rights, with the sole commitment of achieving justice, transparency and truthfulness.

Excellencies:

I will now speak on behalf of Cuba, a founding member of this Council and a country committed, now and forever, to international cooperation and the genuine dialogue on human rights, as well as to the legitimacy and credibility of the Council that we are building.

Last June, at the opening meeting of this Council, Cuba pointed out that such session could usher in a new stage in the endeavor to create a real system for the promotion and protection of all human rights for all the inhabitants of the planet, and not just for the rich and privileged. We then made it clear that a radical change was needed in the conceptions and methods that weighed down the discredited Commission on Human Rights.

Back then, we said that Cuba was not dreaming about the real willingness of the developed countries, allies of the United States, to take this major and historical step. However, we affirmed that we would give them the benefit of the doubt and, above all, that we would watch them.

Where do we stand today, nine months after that warning?

The Human Rights Council is running the risk of falling for the disrepute of politicization and double standards, even before the establishment of its mechanisms and working methods. We have been warning, and we say so again now, about the attempt by some to delay the institutional creation of the Council until after 18 June 2007 and bring back to life the practice of punitive resolutions against countries of the South.

The term of one year, granted by the General Assembly for the institutional establishment of the Council, is a deadline that must not be altered in any way.

The real motivation behind this dilatory scheme promoted by some allies of the United States is to transfer the final stage of the process to a new membership of the Council and, above all, to another Table, which they view as more favorable to their interests.

Those who are most strongly supporting this course of action happen to be the same players interested in pervading this Council with selectivity, political manipulation and double standards. In other words, they would like to turn the new body into an Inquisition tribunal against the countries of the South and ensure impunity for the atrocities committed, even outside the borders of their territories, by powers with Empire-like designs. The recipe being proposed to us is based on the same cynicism, hypocrisy and guilty complicity that caused the now-defunct Commission on Human Rights to run aground.

It so happens that the United States, now “completely sidelined,” has become the most scathing critic of the Council. Some acolytes echo them. But we will not be deceived by their schemes and scams. They are airing their criticisms not to improve the Council, which would be legitimate and useful, but to frustrate the process. They do not want a credible Council with authority. They are longing for the old Commission. Cuba demands our right to build the Council needed today, and demands that the hypocrites let us work.

Relying on a fully operational Council that is capable of fulfilling the mandate assigned to it in its second year of work is an essential necessity and a realizable goal. More time is not required. What is lacking is the political will.

Excellencies:

Cuba hopes that this Council will finally become an entity of genuine cooperation and respectful dialogue, of usefulness in fighting for the vindication of truth and justice, in the defense of the right to sovereignty, self-determination, peace, development, equality, real and participatory democracy and the truthful respect for and enjoyment of all human rights for all peoples.

This body would be off to a bad start if the manipulations that characterized the former Commission persisted. The perpetuation of country-specific mandates, imposed by force and blackmail, would maintain the spiraling confrontation that did away with the authority and credibility of the defunct Commission on Human Rights.

It is not legitimate or ethical to impose or extend spurious mandates against countries of the South, while there is complicity in turning one's eyesight away not to notice the blatant, massive and systematic human rights violations which, under the pretext of an alleged war on terror, are committed with impunity by the Government of the United States and its main allies. This is the real hindrance that we should remove from the new Council.

Cuba defends, however, the strengthening of the system of thematic rapporteurs. Never before were they so necessary.

In a world in which 852 million people are starving, how could we do without the work of the Rapporteur on the Right to Food?

Faced with the reality of international torture centers as the one established in the US Naval Base of Guantanamo and the operation of secret flights for the kidnapping and movement of people through Europe in order to be tortured in underground jails, how could we allow the mandate of the Rapporteur on Torture to be discontinued?

In a world in which the richest and wealthiest countries, while fostering the "brain drain", face the poor immigrants with racist and discriminatory persecutions, and while the United States is even building a shameful wall of containment where 500 people are murdered every year, how could we even think of discontinuing the mandate of the Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Immigrants?

In this globalized world, in which a few transnational corporations monopolize the control over the information flows, and where over 1,000 reporters were murdered in the last ten years, how could we get rid of the mandate of the Rapporteur on the Freedom of Opinion and Speech?

Faced with a reality such as that undergone by five heroic Cuban youths, unjustly imprisoned in the United States for challenging the impunity enjoyed by the terrorist groups acting against the Cuban people from Miami, a situation that could very well repeat itself tomorrow with citizens of any other country, would it then be fair not to rely on a special procedure on arbitrary detention?

How could we turn our backs on the tens of thousands of families that are still demanding justice and the right to the truth on their missing or executed relatives during the military dictatorships imposed and supported by Washington in Latin America? It is not possible then to eliminate the mandates on forced disappearances and extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions.

As long as the Palestinian people is prevented from its right to establish its own State and the Israeli occupiers continue to engage in the serious harassment of the civilian population in the occupied territories, this Council will not be able to do without the relevant issue on its agenda, or without the work of the Rapporteur following this situation.

Cuba will defend the continuity and integrity of that asset inherited from the Commission on Human Rights, composed of mechanisms established under the principles of objectivity and non-selectivity. We will continue to cooperate fully with all of them.

Excellencies:

Cuba believes that we still have time to begin a new era in the struggle to create a real system for the promotion and protection of all human rights for all.

However, I would like to reiterate today that if we are finally forced to go into the past and if confrontation and the pursuit of hegemonies prevailed in the Council, Cuba will once again be a fighter in the trenches of ideas. We will know how to represent a people that has been able to endure and overcome the aggression of the Empire for nearly five decades, which has resisted with dignity and steadfastness the tightening of the genocidal blockade which, I say so modestly, has already become a symbol in the fight of the peoples for their real empowerment.

Thank you very much.