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Official Records

President: Mr. Lykketoft (Denmark)

In the absence of the President, Mr. González Franco (Paraguay), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 42 (continued)

Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba

Report of the Secretary-General (A/70/120)

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote on resolution 70/5, which was adopted at the 40th meeting, I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Miguel (St. Vincent and Grenadines): Saint Vincent and the Grenadines wholeheartedly aligns itself with the statements made today on behalf of the Caribbean Community, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China (see A/70/PV.40).

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines enthusiastically welcomed the executive decision of 17 December 2014 by United States President Barack Obama to take significant steps towards the normalization of relations between the United States of America and the Republic of Cuba. The Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines applauds all the steps taken to date, although the economic, commercial and financial blockade remains intact.

My delegation takes the floor today to reiterate that the economic, commercial and financial embargo has been and continues to be a violation of international law. It is contrary to the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines re-emphasizes its deeply held conviction that the ongoing embargo is a flagrant and systematic violation of the rights of an entire people. Moreover, the embargo against Cuba is not merely a bilateral matter between Cuba and the United States of America; due to its extraterritorial nature, it also violates the sovereign rights of many other States.

As far wealthier nations and institutions have looked askance at our development struggles and offered only dubious prescriptions and platitudes, the Cuban people have rolled up their sleeves and given freely of themselves in a manner that has touched the hearts and souls of the Vincentian people. No dollar amount can adequately reflect the value of that support, solidarity and partnership, for which the Cuban people have asked nothing in return. Our appreciation cannot be overstated.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines believes that the blockade is not only illegal, but morally unsustainable. In the introduction to his famed essay “Common Sense”, Thomas Paine wrote,

“a long habit of not thinking a thing wrong, gives it a superficial appearance of being right, and raises at first a formidable outcry in defence of custom. But tumult soon subsides. Time makes more converts than reason”.

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And so it is today with respect to the blockade. Citizens across the United States of America are joining the international community by increasingly voicing their disapproval and calling for the lifting of the unilateral sanctions. For instance, the Cuban-American community in Miami-Dade County is the largest concentration of Cubans outside the island. The community's significance for local and national elections is frequently highlighted during election cycles and its members are often credited, or criticized, for controlling United States policy towards Cuba. A 2014 poll of that community, conducted by Florida International University, showed that 57 per cent of registered voters would likely vote for a candidate who supported replacing the embargo with a policy increasing support of independent business owners. In that same poll, 81 per cent of registered voters stated that they would likely vote for a candidate who supported replacing the embargo with a policy increasing support for human rights. However the polling questions were couched, the overwhelming conclusion underscores the necessity of ending the blockade.

Opposition to that inhumane policy is now almost universal in nature. The stirring and inspiring words of United States President Barack Obama's inaugural address to the General Assembly in 2009 remain relevant:

"The choice is ours. We can be remembered as the generation that chose to drag the arguments of the twentieth century into the twenty-first, and that put off hard choices, refused to look ahead, and failed to keep pace because we defined ourselves by what we were against instead of what we were for; or we can be a generation that chooses to see the shoreline beyond the rough waters ahead, that comes together to serve the common interests of human beings, and finally gives meaning to the promise imbedded in the name given to this institution — the United Nations." (A/64/PV.3, p. 11)

Let us put twentieth-century arguments behind us. Let us forswear illegal, unilateral action. Let us instead look to the future, keep pace with the times and heed the insistent and consistent voice of the international community. Resolution 70/5 is not simply some ritualistic annual rite of the United Nations. It is a matter of life and death for approximately 12 million Cubans. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines naturally voted in favour of resolution 70/5. However, we believe

in change and live in hope that there will be no need for us to gather here next year to vote on this text yet again.

Mr. Mohamed (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to welcome Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba.

The delegation of the Sudan aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, Sierra Leone on behalf of the Group of African States, South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and Kuwait on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (see A/70/PV.40).

The delegation of the Sudan would like to clarify its position after the voting on resolution 70/5, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba". We voted in favour of resolution 70/5 on the basis of our conviction that the embargo imposed on Cuba should end and that the General Assembly should speak as one in condemning all unilateral coercive sanctions that run counter to international law, the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and free trade and navigation.

A few weeks ago, we adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), paragraph 30 of which strongly urges Member States

"to refrain from promulgating and applying any unilateral economic, financial or trade measures not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations that impede the full achievement of economic and social development, particularly in developing countries".

That underscores the illegality of the policies imposed by the United States of America against the Cuban people, which have continued for 55 years. The imposition of coercive measures on a people, in an attempt to influence their national choices and freedom regarding their political, economic and social regimes, is totally illegal and undemocratic.

The General Assembly has always rejected coercive unilateral measures that adversely affect socioeconomic development, especially in developing countries. That was clearly voiced in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want" (resolution 66/288, annex). The same position has been reaffirmed

at previous summits and ministerial meetings of the Group of 77 and China and the Non-Aligned Movement. In that regard, we welcome the restoration of diplomatic and political relations between Cuba and the United States of America and the removal of Cuba from the list of countries that sponsor terrorism. That is a very positive step. We hope to see similar positive steps that will culminate in the total lifting of the embargo.

Since 1997, our country and our people have suffered under a unilateral embargo imposed by the United States that is totally unfair and is renewed annually. It has adversely affected all aspects of life, as it restricts banking transactions, trade and opportunities for international cooperation with other States, and impacts our progress in regard to the Millennium Development Goals. Our solidarity with the people of Cuba and the Cuban Government is therefore a reflection of our principled rejection of that aggressive policy, our deep-rooted solidarity with the Cuban people and our empathy with their suffering under an embargo that has deprived them of quality education, health care and international cooperation. Without a doubt, the poor are the primary victims. We commend the position of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, which has appointed a Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights. We urge the General Assembly to fully support the Special Rapporteur.

In conclusion, my delegation expresses its solidarity with Cuba. We underscore the importance for all Member States, especially developing countries, to show solidarity by rejecting illegal unilateral sanctions and measures imposed on developing countries. The delegation of the Sudan calls for an end to the embargo and sanctions against Cuba, our country and all other States and peoples suffering from the same policies.

Mr. Phansourivong (Lao People's Democratic Republic): The Lao People's Democratic Republic aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of South Africa and Malaysia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of 77 and China and the Association of Southeast Nations, respectively (see A/70/PV.40).

In an era of interdependence, cooperation and engagement are key factors of peaceful coexistence and mutual benefit. In that light, the Lao People's Democratic Republic welcomes the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Cuba and

the United States of America, which has opened a new chapter in relations between the two countries, which had been stalled for decades. At the same time, we are concerned by the continuing unilateral economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba.

While expressing its concern over the embargo imposed on Cuba, the Lao People's Democratic Republic hopes that the recent re-establishment of diplomatic relations, which is the first concrete step towards genuine normalization of relations between the two countries, will lead to its lifting soon. The Lao People's Democratic Republic believes that such a step will mutually benefit both countries, as it will create an environment conducive to further enhancing dialogue and cooperation between the two countries, which in turn will contribute to improving the well-being of the Cuban people and their Government and allow Cuba to engage in international trade and economic exchanges with nations around the world, including the United States of America.

Ms. Velichko (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Belarus associates itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Once again, Belarus emphasizes the unacceptability of imposing unilateral coercive measures as a means of exerting political and economic pressure on sovereign States. We deem such actions to run counter to the principal norms of international law, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the 1970 Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

In 2015, the establishment of the post of United Nations Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights confirmed the timeliness of this issue and the need to review the damaging practice of imposing unilateral coercive measures with a view to their subsequent elimination. There are no good unilateral coercive measures. They always only benefit the political ambitions of the countries that initiate them, and never take into account the interests of the States against which they are used.

The financial and economic blockade of Cuba by the United States of America creates artificial barriers to trade and hinders the development of the Cuban economy. Furthermore, for many years now it has infringed on the legitimate rights and interests

of Cuban citizens. Belarus supports the inalienable right of every State to determine its own model of development. Any attempt by some States to change the internal political system of other States through resort to military, political, economic or other means of pressure is unacceptable and counterproductive.

In that connection, Belarus calls for a speedy end to the economic, financial and commercial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. The full lifting of sanctions could be one of the most important practical steps in the budding normalization of bilateral relations between the United States and Cuba. The need to end these unilateral coercive measures is also reflected in the outcome document of the 2015 Sustainable Development Summit (resolution 70/1), held in September, which was adopted unanimously by the States Members of the United Nations. Perhaps the time has come to take the corresponding steps to implement the outcome document, including by ending unilateral coercive measures.

Mr. Aldahhak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to welcome Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba. On behalf of my country, I reiterate my country's full support for him and for the people and the Government of Cuba in dealing with the unjust embargo that successive United States Administrations have imposed on Cuba for decades.

My delegation endorses the statements delivered by the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, respectively (see A/70/PV.40).

The decades-long embargo imposed on Cuba has set an unacceptable precedent that runs counter to international law and has left the people and country of Cuba vulnerable to untold economic, social and political damage. The embargo, which has been unanimously rejected, has exacerbated the hardships endured by Cuba and led to material losses of over \$121 billion to date.

For the twenty-fourth consecutive year, an overwhelming majority of the General Assembly has confirmed the illegal and inhumane nature of that embargo. The blockade runs counter to the Charter of the United Nations, international law, the principles of sovereign equality among nations and non-interference in the internal affairs of States, numerous human rights

instruments, international humanitarian law, global trade laws, and tenets of international development.

While we recognize recent United States policies towards Cuba, the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries and the United States President's recognition of this rapprochement, we call for the lifting of the embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba since 1959. The embargo remains in force despite the successive calls by States Members of the Organization, United Nations agencies, regional organizations and specialized agencies to lift the embargo.

Today, 191 countries voted in favour of resolution 70/5. Once again, the international community's call for an immediate end to the embargo reaffirms the illegitimate nature of the embargo against Cuba. The vote against the resolution by Israel, the occupying Power proves the latter's lack of respect for international law, the Charter of the United Nations and United Nations resolutions.

The Syrian Arab Republic insists that the unilateral coercive measures imposed by the United States of America and the European Union represent a flagrant violation of international law and amount to the imposition of Western hegemony and political and economic pressure on other peoples. Such measures seek to subjugate and weaken Member States, run counter to the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, constitute interference in the internal affairs of Member States, and reflect the collective punitive policies practiced by the imposing countries. We all know the devastating effects of the embargoes imposed against Iraq and Libya on the civilians of those countries.

My country reiterates its condemnation of the coercive measures imposed by the United States of America and the European Union against the Syrian people. We emphasize the negative effects of such illegitimate unilateral measures, which prevent Syrians from meeting their basic daily needs; from gaining access to food, education, health care, fuel, agricultural equipment, air and ground transportation; and from maintaining aircraft and communications equipment, among other deprivations. Such collective measures violate the human rights of the Syrian people and negatively impact the Syrian economy. Winter is coming and millions of Syrians will have no heating fuel as a result of the coercive measures imposed by

those who claim to care for the well-being of the Syrian people.

We wish to reiterate that the decision of certain States to impose unilateral coercive measures is in violation of resolution 68/200, on unilateral economic measures as a means of political and economic coercion against developing countries, and resolution 69/180, on human rights and unilateral coercive measures. In those resolutions, the General Assembly reiterates its condemnation and rejection of unilateral coercive measures that infringe on the rights enumerated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights instruments.

The General Assembly should take the measures necessary to end the embargo and the imposition of all unfair unilateral coercive measures and hostile policies by some Members of the Organization. Such policies run counter to international law, reflect aggression and violate the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. Accordingly, my country wishes to see an end to the embargo against Cuba and unilateral, coercive measures imposed on other Member States, including my country, Syria.

We hope that the voice of the international community, which is expressed through the General Assembly and other international bodies, will be heard by the United States of America and that the legislative powers of the United States will comply with the provisions of international law. My country therefore voted in favour of resolution 70/5.

Mr. Jaime Calderón (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, His Excellency Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, who is with us today.

El Salvador associates itself with the statements made by the representatives of Ecuador on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, and of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China (see A/70/PV.40).

I should like to make the following statement in explanation of my country's vote in favour of resolution 70/5, on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba.

The Government of El Salvador respects the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and recalls that they remain

valid and should be respected by all States during the process of change that we have launched. Currently, the members of the international community have been both witnesses and active proponents of major changes. As we celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the Organization, this is a decisive time for us in the light of the new opportunities and global challenges we face as we define a new paradigm of development, cooperation and solidarity among the peoples of the world. We entered a new phase in the future of humankind when we adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1).

Against that backdrop, my country welcomes the important step taken by the President of Cuba, Raúl Castro, and the President of the United States, Barack Obama, in opening a new chapter in history with the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. We believe it important to cite a statement made by President Obama at a press conference, to the effect that we cannot keep doing the same thing for 50 years and expect a different result. This statement clearly charts a new path in the relationship between the two countries and with respect to the embargo that affects the Cuban people. As noted by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of El Salvador at the most recent general debate,

“we should also mention the process of detente that has begun between Cuba and the United States of America, a process that has had a positive impact not only on the relations between the two countries, but also on the continent as a whole. El Salvador is pleased with the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States of America and trusts that in the current favourable climate, the will expressed to lift the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba will become a reality as soon as possible” (A/70/PV.28, p. 3).

Although the regulations issued by the United States Departments of the Treasury and Commerce on 15 January are a step in the right direction on such issues as the reopening of embassies, visiting delegations, a bilateral relations committee, travel to Cuba, telecommunications and remittances, such measures are limited in scope and will change only certain aspects of the implementation of the embargo. However, the economic embargo remains in effect, and actions such as the 42 multi-million-dollar fines against United States and foreign companies for conducting

financial transactions with Cuba generate major economic and commercial losses for the Government of Cuba, those businesses themselves and, by extension, the Cuban people.

El Salvador calls for an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba, not only because it is unjust and illegal but because it is not supported by the international community. In that context, El Salvador reiterates the importance of complying with the provisions of resolution 47/19, of 24 November 1992, and all other resolutions that have been adopted every year since then by the General Assembly on this item, and which emphasize the need to end the embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba.

El Salvador, a country committed to working for peaceful coexistence among nations, fully supports and voted in favour of the resolution on the necessity of ending the economic embargo against Cuba. To conclude, we reiterate the following three aspirations of our people and Government. We hope, first, that the Government of the United States will lift the embargo; secondly, that the dialogue between Cuba and the United States will continue; and, lastly, that after so many years, we in the Americas can sit around the same table without anyone being excluded.

Mr. Mangisi (Tonga): At the outset, we would like to acknowledge the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba.

I take the floor to explain my delegation's position on resolution 70/5, adopted earlier today by the overwhelming majority of Member States. Of such importance is that matter for my delegation that we have decided for the first time to take the floor and speak to the issue, further to our demonstrated support in previous years by way of votes in favour.

After more than two decades of the General Assembly's consideration of this agenda item, the resolution adopted earlier reflects significant changes in the bilateral circumstances between Cuba and the United States. We join those welcoming the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between those countries, and the steps that have been taken that positively modify the embargo. Such initial positive steps towards the normalization of bilateral relations have thus far stopped short of lifting the blockade, which presently remains in effect.

For decades, the embargo has caused significant economic damage, amounting to billions of dollars, and resulted in immeasurable suffering for the people of Cuba, not to mention the difficulties that our own nationals themselves are facing as young university students in Cuba because of the current adverse effects of the embargo. As the longest-lasting system of unilateral sanctions ever applied to one country, it unjustly hinders the economic and social development of the Cuban people. Moreover, the embargo is contrary to the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations. We therefore join the call to end the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed against Cuba.

Finally, the Kingdom of Tonga adheres fully to the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and accepted under international law, in particular the principles of the sovereign equality of States, non-intervention and non-interference in their internal affairs, and the freedom of international trade and, of course, navigation. We therefore voted in favour of resolution 70/5, to support the right of the Cuban people to enjoy full freedom in their economic and social development.

Mr. Silwamba (Zambia): Zambia aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Sierra Leone on behalf of the Group of African States, South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, respectively (see A/70/PV.40).

My delegation welcomes His Excellency Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, to this meeting.

My delegation takes note of the Secretary-General's report (A/70/120) and the views expressed therein. As a nation, we have been part of the chorus of supporters of Cuba by voting and speaking in favour of similar resolutions for the more than two decades during which the General Assembly has considered this item. Today, we again reaffirmed our full support and voted in favour of resolution 70/5.

Zambia continues to be greatly concerned that, after 53 years of embargo and 23 consecutive General Assembly resolutions, the sanctions are still in place. It remains Zambia's concern that numerous laws and regulations are still in existence. Their effect is often extraterritorial in nature and they often affect the sovereignty of third States, together with the legitimate

interests of entities or persons under their jurisdiction. Cuba continues to face severe restrictions in its ability to raise the necessary developmental funds on the international markets.

We are not oblivious to the developments on the ground, and we commend the diplomatic milestones that have resulted in improved relations between the United States of America and Cuba. Zambia welcomes the decision by His Excellency President Raul Castro of Cuba and His Excellency President Barack Obama of the United States of America to re-establish diplomatic relations in December 2014. In addition, Zambia welcomes other subsequent measures undertaken by the United States, including the decision on 16 January to amend the Cuban Assets Control Regulation and the Export Administration Regulations. Zambia further welcomes the latter's decision to take measures to remove Cuba from the list of State sponsors of terrorism, as was announced on 14 April.

On the basis of all this, my delegation believes that a new dawn is before us and that a return to normalcy in the relations between the United States and Cuba is now on the horizon. We need to support the ongoing efforts so that the momentum created thus far is not lost. No one should be allowed to squander the momentum that has already been built. We acknowledge that the unilateral sanctions against Cuba are still in place. The people of that great country continue to experience the effects of the economic, commercial and financial embargo against their country. The right to influence their own development path has been severely restricted, with access for sourcing international technology and expertise in critical sectors — such as finance, technology, education and health, among others — being greatly curtailed.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to reassure the Cuban people of Zambia's continued solidarity on that matter. We equally commend the Government of the United States of America for the positive strides taken in the recent past. We will support all efforts aimed at restoring the relations between the two nations. It is for that reason that we continue to support the United Nations call for lifting the economic embargo on Cuba.

Mr. Amihai Bivas (Israel): Let me just say that Israel follows with great interest the renewal of diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba and clarify that our vote is an expression of our special relations with the United States.

Mr. Percaya (Indonesia): Let me first recognize and express our appreciation of the presence of Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla on this very important occasion.

The delegation of Indonesia associates itself with the statements made by the representatives of South Africa, Malaysia and the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement, respectively (see A/70/PV.40).

Faithful to its history and to its national character, Indonesia is a country committed to peace, justice and equality. For that reason, Indonesia stands before this forum to once again declare its unrelenting support for an end to the embargo against Cuba. We must without delay overcome that relic of another time, for it has no *raison d'être* in the new millennium that we are building together. I shall offer four valid reasons for ending it.

First, it goes against the very principles of the sovereign equality of all Member States, non-intervention and non-interference in one another's domestic affairs, as stipulated in the Charter of the United Nations. The Charter clearly states the need for Member States to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State. The continued imposition of an economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba clearly violates the Charter. All Member States are equal. None is above the others, as we are bound by the principles of friendly relations among nations. Here at the United Nations, dialogue has always been the norm put forward by any civilized nation to resolve differences. There should be cooperation rather than confrontation.

Secondly, the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed against Cuba has caused significant economic and social hardship that can hardly be justified on humanitarian grounds. It has caused years of deprivation for the people of Cuba, especially for such vulnerable groups as children, women and older persons. That is a great burden for a developing country, whose people would benefit tremendously from the good faith of the developed countries. We have also been discussing an ambitious vision to eradicate poverty through an inclusive post-2015 development agenda. It will only be inclusive if those who are the most vulnerable, including the people of Cuba, are involved in the process and able to reap the benefits

of development without any constraint on the part of foreign hands.

Thirdly, the sanctions constitute a counterproductive policy that has curbed opportunities and economic benefits for Cuba and other countries, including countries that maintain economic and commercial ties with Cuba. In that process, the sovereignty of other States and their jurisdiction over their own national legislation have been encroached upon. Cuba is not the only victim. We, the developing countries, trade partners and financial investors are also the victims of that undeserved embargo.

Fourthly, our regional experience in South-East Asia has raised immense confidence that engagement will do more than isolation to advance the noble causes to which all States Members of the United Nations ascribe. The time is ripe for relations between the parties involved to be transformed through constructive engagement. Cuba should be able to exercise its right to develop and grow, unhindered by restrictions to its trade and other business activities.

While it is true that some meaningful progress has occurred in recent times, such as the easing of travel restrictions to Cuba and the removal of obstacles to transferring remittances, the preferred outcome is for the embargo to be lifted completely. Indonesia urges States to renounce applying laws or measures of an extraterritorial nature that affect the sovereignty of other States, the lawful interests of their subjects or of other persons under their jurisdiction, and freedom of trade and navigation.

In the light of all of the considerations I mentioned earlier, Indonesia continues to support this resolution and reiterates the call for the immediate cessation of the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba.

Finally, our message is simple. Our message is clear. This embargo has to end, and end now.

Mr. Lucas (Angola): Let me start by warmly welcoming the Cuban Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, to this meeting.

The Republic of Angola voted in favour of resolution 70/5, on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. In this explanation of vote, Angola associates itself with the statements made by the representative of Sierra Leone

on behalf of the African Group; the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries; and by the representative of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Angola has been following closely the process that led to the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba, which we warmly welcome. However, although President Obama performed a historic act of justice, notifying the American Congress of his decision to remove Cuba from the list of States sponsors of terrorism, this does not yet imply relief from the prohibitions and restrictions imposed by the laws and regulations relating to the blockade against Cuba.

In that context, Angola reiterates the urgent need to end the economic, financial and commercial embargo on Cuba, which infringes on the right of the Cuban people to development and is contrary to the principles and rules of international law. The embargo also violates the human rights of the Cuban people, the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the rules of free trade.

Angola welcomes the desire expressed by President Barack Obama to work towards ending the blockade against Cuba and encourages both parties to work towards the full normalization of relations, including economic relations, as soon as possible. The blockade against Cuba is unilateral and the most unjust, severe and prolonged sanctions regime ever enforced.

According to the report submitted by Cuba to the General Assembly (see A/70/120), the economic damage inflicted on the Cuban people amounts, at current prices, to more than \$121 million. Angola regrets the fact that the American Congress has not yet approved any of the bills aimed at eliminating at least some of the most conspicuous measures imposed by the embargo. On the contrary, about 10 legislative initiatives have been presented to Congress with the purpose of strengthening fundamental aspects of the blockade policy, thus preventing President Obama from passing new executive measures or implementing those that have already been passed.

The embargo affects the material, psychological and spiritual well-being of the Cuban people and imposes severe obstacles on their economic, cultural and social development, with a significant negative impact on sensitive sectors such as health care, education, food and nutrition. It is an illegal and unfair act.

Angola notes with concern the continuation of the extraterritorial nature of the embargo, notably in the banking and financial areas. It is unfortunate that the United States maintains this position despite the visible progress achieved by Cuba in various areas, in which it has helped many countries in need. A recent example of Cuba's solidarity was its valuable contribution to the global efforts to combat the Ebola epidemic affecting the West African region by sending several hundred health professionals, with outstanding results, in the fight for the eradication of the disease.

Angola recognizes and encourages once again the efforts of the Secretary-General to put an end to the economic, trade and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba, which has been enforced for more than half a century. We therefore call on the international community to intensify efforts to promote a constructive and transparent dialogue between the two countries, with a view to achieving a definitive solution to this problem.

Additionally, we encourage the United States to join the overwhelming majority of States Members of the United Nations, which have, through numerous and relevant resolutions, called persistently for an end to the embargo, with a view to providing an environment conducive to fruitful cooperation between the two countries and Latin America in general.

Mr. Shava (Zimbabwe): I should like to recognize the presence of the Cuban Minister for Foreign Affairs among us today and to thank him for his clear statement on the ongoing diplomatic dialogue between his country and the United States.

Zimbabwe aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of South Africa, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China; the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement; and the representative of Sierra Leone, on behalf of the African Group (see A/70/PV.40).

Allow me to make a few remarks in my national capacity.

For the past 22 years, the Assembly has consistently condemned and opposed the continuation of the economic, commercial and financial embargo that was unilaterally imposed against the people and the Republic of Cuba by the United States of America. The Assembly has consistently demanded the unconditional lifting of the embargo against the Republic of Cuba, which has caused enormous human suffering and

economic damage to the people of Cuba. We believe that its continuation is indefensible and unjustified.

The economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba constitutes the single largest principal obstacle to Cuba's trade and economic development potential. Zimbabwe shares the view of the greater majority of the members of the Assembly that the embargo constitutes a flagrant violation of the fundamental norms of international law and is contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, as well as the norms and principles governing peaceful relations among States. It also violates the human rights of the people of Cuba by undermining their access to various social services.

Despite the burden of the embargo, Cuba has demonstrated its commitment to development cooperation by assisting many countries in the areas of education, health, humanitarian assistance and so on. Most recently, it contributed significantly to combating the Ebola outbreak in West Africa.

Zimbabwe joins other members of the Assembly in calling for an immediate and unconditional lifting of the embargo in order to allow the people of Cuba to freely chart their own economic and social destiny, like any other sovereign State. We also join other Member States in rejecting the promulgation and application of national laws with extraterritorial impact, and all other coercive economic measures, including unilateral sanctions, that mainly target developing countries seeking to assert their sovereignty. As a victim of such ill-conceived, illegal and immoral economic sanctions, Zimbabwe fully understands their impact and therefore calls on Member States to refrain from promulgating and applying such laws and measures.

While we commend the United States of America's restoration of full diplomatic relations with the Republic of Cuba, as well as its loosening of some aspects of the embargo, Zimbabwe is of the view that lifting the embargo altogether and immediately is essential to the full normalization of relations. We believe it will have mutual benefits for both countries in the form of the creation of new business and trade opportunities.

In conclusion, the outcome of today's vote on resolution 70/5 clearly demonstrates that the international community is unanimous in its desire for an immediate end to the United States trade embargo on Cuba. In anticipation of the lifting of the embargo and the full normalization of bilateral relations, we

hope this is the last time that the Assembly has to deal with this agenda item.

Mr. Berridge (Saint Kitts and Nevis): The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis wishes to register its support for today's adoption of resolution 70/5, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

At the outset, Saint Kitts and Nevis associates itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of the Republic of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, of Jamaica on behalf of the Caribbean Community and of Ecuador on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (see A/70/PV.40).

Saint Kitts and Nevis welcomes the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Cuba and the United States. That was indeed a historic moment, ushering in a new era in bilateral relations between the two countries, and it holds much promise for the wider hemispheric region. Saint Kitts and Nevis regrets, however, that the blockade of Cuba has remained in place. Stiff fines are being imposed on financial institutions and other establishments that engage in business transactions with Cuba. That unilateral policy has imposed indiscriminate hardship on the people of Cuba and continues to adversely affect a wide gamut of sectors in the Cuban economy, from agriculture, medicine and education to sports and culture, energy, mining, tourism and transport. It has also created impediments to Cuba's socioeconomic development.

It is evident that even with the recent rapprochement between the United States and Cuba, the persistence of the economic, commercial and financial blockade has had untold repercussions for the development of the Cuban economy, to the detriment of the Cuban populace. While the people of Cuba have been forced to be creative in order to circumvent the negative impact of the embargo, the economic fallout has been real. Billions of dollars have been either diverted or spent on sourcing supplies from other countries, thereby increasing the transaction value of the goods involved.

In spite of the hardship experienced by the Government and people of Cuba, we have witnessed a strong demonstration of goodwill and generosity towards its sister countries in the Caribbean and beyond. Indeed, Cuba has risen to challenges in time of

need, lending expertise and sharing its scarce resources in order to assist humankind. The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis would like to place on record its appreciation for the support Cuba has provided in the areas of tertiary education, sports, culture, medicine, health care and agriculture.

It is indeed regrettable that the Government and the people of Cuba have suffered as a result of this unilateral measure imposed by the United States for more than four decades. We join the rest of the international community in calling for an immediate end to the embargo against the people of Cuba, which has had such deleterious effects on its community. We also urge the United States to accelerate the steps it has already taken to formally normalize relations with Cuba. In doing so, the powers that be would effectively unlock the vast potential that is associated with free and fair trade.

This is a momentous period for the international community. In the aftermath of the United Nations Summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, and our leaders' commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), ushering in a paradigm shift in development and engagement, we reiterate our call for an end to this unilateral action, which runs counter to that endeavour. It is therefore an opportune time for this vestige of a bygone era to be done away with. With that accomplished, we are confident that the people of Cuba will have a better chance to achieve the Goals and targets established within the three dimensions of the Sustainable Development Agenda by 2030.

Mr. Tin (Myanmar): My delegation would first like to join others in welcoming the presence of Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, at today's important meeting.

My delegation has taken the floor to explain its position on resolution 70/5, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba", adopted today by an overwhelming majority of Member States.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and of Malaysia on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (see A/70/PV.40).

Myanmar voted in favour of today's resolution in order to demonstrate once again its firm opposition to the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on Cuba. Since the first time this text was introduced in the General Assembly in 1992, a growing number of Member States have shown their strong support for and solidarity with the Government and the people of Cuba by voting in its favour. My delegation also joins the international community in calling for an end to the embargo, which has resulted in huge material losses and economic damage to the Cuban people. As a country that has gone through similar experiences for decades, Myanmar fully understands the degree of loss and suffering that sanctions cause the people. In the end, they are counterproductive, since they affect only the innocent people of the countries concerned.

As a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, Myanmar has steadfastly adhered to its principled position of opposition to the use of unilateral economic and trade sanctions. Sanctions are also contrary to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as those of international law and good neighbourliness. Myanmar has always maintained that relations between members of the international community should be based on mutual respect and that differences should be resolved through dialogue.

Myanmar welcomes the recent positive steps the United States and Cuba have taken to normalize their bilateral relations. We also welcome the recent reopening of their respective embassies in Washington and Havana. We hope that such efforts will lead to the lifting of the embargo on Cuba as soon as possible, which would not only benefit the peoples of both countries but would also contribute to peace and prosperity in the region as a whole. For that reason, Myanmar once again voted in favour of the resolution.

Mr. Mac-Donald (Suriname): I would first like to welcome the presence here this morning and afternoon of His Excellency Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, and to thank him for his statement (see A/70/PV.40).

At the outset, Suriname wishes to align itself with the statements delivered earlier by the representatives of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, of Kuwait on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, of Ecuador on behalf of the Community of Latin American and

Caribbean Countries and of Jamaica on behalf of the Caribbean Community (see A/70/PV.40).

In addressing the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session, the President of the Republic of Suriname, His Excellency Mr. Desiré Delano Bouterse, while reiterating Suriname's deep concern about the persisting economic, commercial and financial embargo on Cuba, posed this question: "How many more resolutions need to be adopted before justice can be done for the people of Cuba?" (*A/66/PV.16, p. 21*) Last month, our Minister for Foreign Affairs, in her address during the general debate for the seventieth session remarked that

"[m]y Government welcomes the positive steps taken towards normalizing bilateral relations between the Republic of Cuba and the United States of America. Suriname has a longstanding friendship with the people of Cuba and we are of the view that the ongoing process of strengthening relations will help to enhance peace, stability, unity and development in the Americas. We agree with the international community that lifting the economic, commercial and financial embargo on Cuba should be a top priority" (*A/70/PV.28, p. 16*).

The blockade of Cuba and its friendly people, which has been in place since the beginning of the 1960s, has caused and continues to cause hardship to the Cuban people, undermining Cuba's efforts to achieve sustainable development for its people. It denies the Cuban people access to basic goods and necessary medicines. In addition, there has been no easing of the problems with financial transactions conducted in United States dollars. On the contrary, the economic damage that the blockade has done to Cuba is enormous. It is also unacceptable that third countries have to suffer from a unilaterally imposed embargo on Cuba when they maintain normal relations with that island nation. The enjoyment of the right to an education is also central to achieving sustainable development, and the Cuban people are also denied that basic right by the hefty fees imposed on the transportation and shipment of education supplies.

Cuba has always positioned itself as an ally and friend to its brothers and sisters in the global South. Notwithstanding the severe challenges and constraints it has to deal with, it has demonstrated its commitment to collaborating with other developing countries, as well as to helping them when crises emerge. Many of us, including my own country, have benefited and

continue to benefit from our various cooperation programmes with Cuba. It is therefore disheartening to note that for the twenty-fourth consecutive time the General Assembly has been asked to consider today's resolution 70/5, on ending the economic, financial and commercial embargo against Cuba, even when it is condemned by an overwhelming majority of the international community.

The international community reiterates the call for respect for the rule of law and its importance in achieving sustainable development. The Government of the Republic of Suriname is of the considered view that sovereign equality, non-interference in countries' internal affairs and other relevant norms governing international relations should be respected at all times. We believe that now is the time to do the right thing. We are convinced that lifting the embargo will greatly benefit the Cuban people. Mindful of that crucial fact, Suriname has maintained its longstanding position and voted in favour of resolution 70/5.

Mrs. Carrión (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would first like to welcome the presence here today of Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba. Uruguay aligns itself with the statements delivered earlier on behalf of the Southern Common Market, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and the Group of 77 and China (see A/70/PV.40).

Uruguay voted in favour of resolution 70/5 today for the following reasons. We welcome the restoration of diplomatic relations between the Governments of Cuba and the United States, which we recognize as a positive step towards the beginning of a new chapter in the relations between both countries. However, the continued blockade is still having a severe economic and humanitarian impact on the Cuban people. We are pleased that Cuba has been removed from the list of States that sponsor terrorism, which it never should have been on in the first place.

The Eastern Republic of Uruguay reiterates the firm position it has expressed on many occasions against the economic, commercial and financial blockade of Cuba and its effect on the well-being of the people of Cuba. Contrary to the principles of justice and human rights, the blockade effectively represents a collective punishment of the Cuban people by seriously damaging the country's economy and limiting and delaying its development. For that reason, as in previous years, this year Uruguay voted in favour of the resolution presented by Cuba in the understanding that the blockade contravenes the rule of law internationally and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, particularly those relating to non-interference, the peaceful settlement of disputes and the judicial sovereignty of States.

On principle, Uruguay rejects and does not recognize in its national legislation another State's extraterritorial application of its internal laws. In that regard, we condemn the United States of America's imposition of unilateral coercive measures on Cuba, which represents a form of oppression and an obstacle to dialogue and the essential and recently renewed rapprochement between the parties. We also believe that the situation is contrary to the standards that regulate international trade and bind the members of the World Trade Organization. In voting in favour of resolution 70/5 today, Uruguay reiterates its commitment to multilateralism as a legitimate instrument for the settlement of disputes among States and an effective way to encourage international cooperation, human rights, security and understanding among peoples.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 42?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.