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Official Records

President: Mr. Thomson (Fiji)

In the absence of the President, Mr. El Haycen (Mauritania), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 39 (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/71/91)

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote after the voting on resolution 71/5, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Murtada Abu Obaida (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the representative of the Niger on behalf of the Group of African States, the representative of Thailand on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the representative of Kuwait on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (see A/71/PV.32).

Paragraph 30 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development urges Member States to refrain from implementing economic, financial and commercial unilateral measures that run counter to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international

law, especially measures imposed against developing countries such as Cuba. The 2030 Agenda therefore reaffirms the illegality of the embargo policy. My country actively contributed to the drafting and adoption of all resolutions on coercive measures and unilateral sanctions, as well as the 2030 Agenda, which we back fully.

We welcome the progress made in the relations between Cuba and the United States and the visit of United States President Barack Obama to Cuba in March, where he stressed his intention to work on ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed against Cuba, restoring diplomatic relations between the two countries and removing Cuba from the list of State sponsors of terrorism. Those are all positive steps, and we expect to see further steps that will lead to lifting the embargo and normalizing relations between the two countries.

Since 1997, my people have suffered under an unjust unilateral embargo that is renewed annually. It has adversely affected all aspects of life, as it restricts banking transactions and our access to grants and loans and spare parts for aircraft and railroads. That has even led to airplane crashes, resulting in the deaths of many women, children and men. It has also affected our opportunities for international cooperation, and it impacted our progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

We express our solidarity with Cuba, as we share its understanding of the suffering and losses incurred by the Cuban people and the impact that it has had on the

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country and the Cuban people's right to development and access to basic health services, education, nutrition, culture, trade and regional and international financing opportunities. Without a doubt, the poor have suffered the most. We value the step taken by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva to appoint a Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights. We call for Member States to support and to help implement the recommendations in the report introduced in the Human Rights Council in Geneva, where the Special Rapporteur spoke about the impact of coercive and unilateral measures on vulnerable groups in society.

Mr. Alarsan (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to welcome Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the friendly nation of Cuba. I would like to renew the support of the Syrian Arab Republic for the Cuban Government and people as they confront the decades-long unjust embargo by the United States. We also congratulate Cuba on the significant diplomatic victory achieved today, which reflects the international community's rejection of the injustice that Cuba has suffered for over 50 years.

My delegation would like to align itself with the statements delivered by the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and by the representative of Thailand on behalf of the Group of 77 and China (see A/71/PV.32). We wish to present the following explanation of vote in our national capacity.

In our discussions of the unjust policies of various influential countries in the world, the decades-long United States embargo against Cuba continues to be a blatant example of an ongoing trend in United States foreign policy that is based on imposing embargoes, punishment and unilateral measures against countries that refuse to follow and submit to United States policies, and that simply wish to live in dignity and freedom and have their independence and national sovereignty respected.

Although the General Assembly has been meeting in this Hall for over half a century to stress, with an overall majority, that it rejects the United States embargo imposed against the Cuban people for that same period, the United States has continued to challenge the will of the international community and to violate the Charter

of the United Nations, international law, human rights law and international humanitarian law. It also violates the basic principles of international relations that are based on respect for sovereignty and non-interference in the affairs of others, as well as respect for national stability and well-being. The international community has welcomed the new policy of the current United States Administration towards Cuba in the belief that the policy will put an end to the unjust embargo imposed against the Cuban people.

Following the visit of the United States President to Cuba, and the warm welcome he received, it seemed that this painful chapter of Cuban history would be closed. No one expected that the United States embargo and unilateral coercive measures against the Cuban people would continue, with new sanctions implemented against companies with a history of dealings with Cuban individuals and institutions conducting legal, banking, industrial and commercial operations pursuant to international trade laws and rules.

Out of principle, my country rejects unilateral measures imposed by any country, whether economic, commercial or financial, that undermine a country's sovereignty, impair its decision-making ability and force it to take specific actions or change its policies. Such unilateral measures constitute collective punishment of an entire population. They undermine the United Nations system and impede international trade operations and the enjoyment of human rights. It is now urgent for the Governments of countries that impose unilateral economic measures to realize that such measures actually increase anti-West sentiment and provide extremists and terrorists with a new weapon to influence vulnerable groups in society that are targeted by illegal unilateral measures. This in turn threatens international peace and security.

Based on those facts, the Syrian Arab Republic voted in favour of resolution 71/5, together with 190 other nations. The country that imposed this unjust embargo against the Cuban people abstained, as did the delegation of the Israeli occupation, which was not surprising, for it has voted against this resolution for 25 years. This demonstrates yet again that it respects neither international law nor the relevant United Nations resolutions nor the Charter of the United Nations.

My country calls on the General Assembly to take the necessary measures, based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, to end the aggressive

practices, embargoes and unilateral economic measures imposed against some countries. We also call for international efforts to be stepped up with a view to exposing the impact of such coercive unilateral measures, which are based on the use of force and hegemony to subjugate others.

We call for the lifting of the embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba and for an end to the unilateral measures imposed by the United States, members of the European Union and other countries against the Syrian Arab Republic. These aggressive coercive measures prevent the Syrian people from accessing basic services such as nutrition, health care, education, medical supplies, fuel, and agricultural and industrial items, as well as spare parts for civil aviation and telecommunications equipment. They violate the rights of the Syrian people and they damage our economy and efforts to combat terrorism.

One question remains unanswered: how can the United States, the countries of the European Union and others reconcile the statements they deliver here and in other forums — about democracy, human rights and sustainable development — with policies that are based on the oppression of peoples and the exploitation of their economic, humanitarian and social situations, or that give a free pass to those who support terrorists?

Mr. Dibaei (Islamic Republic of Iran): Today the General Assembly once again expressed its support for and solidarity with the Government and the people of Cuba through a decisive vote in favour of resolution 71/5, which calls for the lifting of the United States embargo against Cuba. One hundred and ninety-one Member States, including the Islamic Republic of Iran, voted in favour of the resolution. The adoption of Assembly resolutions on this topic, with such a wide range of support and over the course of so many years, clearly indicates the strong objection of the international community to unilateral economic coercive measures in general and the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed against Cuba in particular.

It is also a sign of increasing sympathy with the aspiration of the Government and the people of Cuba to end this unlawful and inhumane embargo. The economic, commercial and financial embargo on Cuba, which has lasted for decades, serves no purpose other than inflicting tremendous hardship and suffering on the people of Cuba, especially women and children. The embargo has seriously jeopardized the legitimate

rights and interests of Cuba and other States, as well as freedom of trade and navigation. It therefore must be lifted immediately, as requested by all the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

Differences and problems among countries should be resolved through peaceful means and dialogue on the basis of equality and mutual respect for the sovereignty of Member States. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran reiterates its strong belief that the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba runs counter to the principles of international law that govern relations among States and contradicts the letter and spirit of the Charter of the United Nations, which calls for the promotion of solidarity, cooperation and friendly relations among nations.

Such measures continue to adversely affect the living conditions and human rights of the Cuban people and will hamper the efforts of the Government of Cuba to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals. In that context, the embargo continues to constrain the efforts of the Government and the people of Cuba to eradicate poverty and hunger and to promote health and education, which are indispensable means for the achievement of economic and social development.

The Islamic Republic of Iran remains opposed to the application of unilateral economic and trade measures by the United States against other countries, blocking the flow of people, trade and finance. We are also opposed to the extraterritorial application and effects of such national legislation on the sovereignty of other States. The sanctions are contrary to the principles of international law, the sovereign equality of States, non-interference in the internal affairs of States and peaceful coexistence among States.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, which has itself experienced economic coercive measures, shares the concern of the Government and the people of Cuba, and therefore emphasizes with the urgent need to put an end to such measures and fully implement the contents of resolution 71/5, adopted today.

Mr. Gumende (Mozambique): Mozambique would like to associate itself with all those countries that voted in favour of resolution 71/5, as it reflects the unconditional and overwhelming support and solidarity of the international community to the cause of the people of Cuba.

By advocating the end of the blockade against Cuba, Mozambique reaffirms its compliance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as the implementation of internationally agreed relevant provisions, including resolution 70/5, adopted during the Assembly's seventieth session. In that context, Mozambique affirms that it has never promulgated, applied or contributed to the application of any of the laws or regulations mentioned in the Assembly's resolutions on this issue.

Mozambique welcomes the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States of America and Cuba. The re-opening of the diplomatic embassies of the two countries and the visit of President Obama to Cuba are among the positive steps taken towards the normalization of bilateral relations. Mozambique commends those steps and wishes to encourage further progress towards the goals and aspirations that the voting pattern in this Hall every year clearly reflects. The result of the voting we have just witnessed represents an important milestone.

It is crucial to remove the existing economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba to allow the country to promote its national development more forcefully in this critical period of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which advocates that we should leave no one behind in pursuing this noble goal.

Notwithstanding the enormous economic and social challenges arising from the blockade, Cuba has played a principled role as a relevant development partner in the context of South-South cooperation and solidarity, a role that is worthy of our continuous praise. Indeed, in the framework of the implementation of our national development agenda, Cuba has always been a reliable cooperation partner, mainly in Mozambique's social sectors such as education and health, alongside other important bilateral and multilateral development partners, whose valuable support we cherish and greatly appreciate.

I would like to conclude by reiterating the support of Mozambique to the cause of the people of Cuba in their quest to secure the lifting of the economic blockade, which is long overdue.

Mr. Mendoza-García (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): My country associates itself with the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and with the statement made by the representative of

the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (see A/71/PV.32). We would also like to share some considerations in our national capacity.

Costa Rica welcomes the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States of America and Cuba. We highlight the March visit of the President of the United States to Cuba, the first in 88 years, as a significant step towards improved and full bilateral relations. We applaud the measures announced by high-level officials of both countries with regard to political dialogue and openness in several mutually beneficial areas, with positive implications for the well-being of the Cuban people.

Today we welcome the new United States position of abstaining in the voting on resolution 71/5, newly adopted.

In fully keeping with international law and the principles undergirding the Charter of the United Nations, Costa Rica reiterates its firm opposition to the current policy of economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed against Cuba, particularly through the Helms-Burton Act, which is a true obstacle to international trade. My delegation stresses that, in line with the core position of our foreign policy, it entirely rejects unilateral and extraterritorial measures, applied by any State against any other, and carried out by the imposition of laws and regulations on third parties.

The official visit of Costa Rica's delegation to Cuba in December 2015 consolidated the process of formalizing diplomatic relations between the two nations and enabled bilateral trade and greater cooperation in work of mutual interest, such as higher education, technical and scientific cooperation and exchange, health, high-performance sports and foreign trade. The Costa Rican agency in charge of promoting foreign trade signed a cooperation agreement with ProCuba that supports the rapprochement of our countries, helps diversify foreign trade and promotes foreign investment.

Our times call for tearing down obstacles that separate nations and generate artificial divisions between peoples. The exchange and development of mutual knowledge of our realities and dreams will give way to greater respect and solidarity among all human beings.

For many decades now, the embargo imposed against Cuba has stood out as a tool of an outdated past

that must be replaced by fraternal engagement among nations in all areas of economic, social, technological and political cooperation within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In that connection, I will end with the words of the President of the Republic, Luis Guillermo Solís Rivera, pronounced during the general debate at the current session of the General Assembly:

“we reiterate our support for the lifting of the economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba in accordance with the systematic, almost unanimous, demands of the international community to that end.” (A/71/PV.10, p.18)

Mr. Lucas (Angola): The Angolan delegation aligns itself with the statements of the representatives of the Niger, Thailand and Venezuela on behalf, respectively, of the Group of African States, the Group of 77 and China and the Non-Aligned Movement (see A/71/PV.32).

Allow me to begin by extending a warm welcome to Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, and congratulating Cuba on the adoption of draft resolution 71/5, on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. That adoption reflects the widespread support of the international community for the Cuban people.

Angola reiterates its appreciation for the normalization of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States. We also welcome President Barack Obama’s historic visit to Cuba this year, in the expectation that it will be a tangible step towards the lifting of the embargo against Cuba. However, despite the encouraging steps taken by the President of the United States to normalize relations between the two countries, outstanding barriers remain. The resolution adopted today is relevant. Angola therefore voted in favour of it, as did the vast majority of the United Nations membership.

The persistence of the economic, commercial and financial measures imposed by the United States against Cuba is a cause for concern. We expect that the resumption of diplomatic relations between the two countries will prompt the United States authorities to continue to take measures aimed at completely ending the embargo, in line with the principles of mutual respect and respect for the Cuban people to freely exercise the right to choose their political and economic systems.

We regret that, despite the executive measures adopted by the President of the United States and his Administration, the embargo remains in force as an obstacle to the full normalization of relations between the two nations. We are particularly concerned about the persistent extraterritorial nature of the embargo, notably in the banking and financial areas. As clearly illustrated by Foreign Minister Rodríguez Parrilla in his statement this morning (see A/71/PV.32), the embargo has exacted an immense human and financial toll on the Cuban people. According to conservative estimates by Cuban authorities, between March 2015 and March 2016, the cost to Cuba of sanctions amounted to over \$4 billion. In that context, Angola reiterates the urgent need to lift the economic, commercial and financial restrictions imposed by the United States against Cuba, which constitute a major obstacle to Cuba’s economic, trade and financial relations with the United States and the rest of the world and prevent the Cuban people from developing their full potential.

Angola reaffirms its commitment to respecting, preserving and promoting the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and provisions of international law, as they constitute the basis of multilateralism in the collective effort to maintain international peace and security, further social and economic development and promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Angola commends, and once again encourages, the efforts of the Secretary-General to put an end to the embargo, which has been in force for over 50 years.

Angola reiterates its unconditional support for the implementation of the provisions set out in the resolution adopted today, and takes this opportunity to appeal once again to the international community to redouble efforts to promote constructive and transparent dialogue between the two countries and achieve the objectives of the resolution.

Finally, Angola commends the position adopted by the United States delegation in abstaining in the voting today, and strongly encourages the United States and Cuba to pursue dialogue and build a relationship based on mutual trust.

Ms. King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): Saint Vincent and the Grenadines aligns itself with the statements delivered today on behalf of the Caribbean Community, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of

77 and China, and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (see A/71/PV.32).

When President Obama elaborated his normalization process, most of the world had already determined that the policy of the United States in relation to Cuba had failed. Indeed, it was viewed globally as a ridiculous anachronism, a relic of the Cold War and the cause of an untenable, unnecessary and undesirable fissure in the hemispheric family. While Saint Vincent and the Grenadines certainly welcomes the steps taken to date by the Obama Administration, it is nevertheless mindful that the economic, commercial and financial blockade remains in place.

My delegation takes the floor today to reiterate that the economic, commercial and financial embargo constitutes the greatest obstacle to the development of the full potential of the Cuban economy and the well-being of its people. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines continues to believe that this blockade is morally unsustainable.

Opposition to that inhumane policy is now almost universal. In this very Hall, just over one year ago, the international community adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which sets Goals to guide the creation of the future we want and aims at leaving no one behind.

The stirring and inspiring words of President Barack Obama in his inaugural address to the General Assembly in 2009 remain relevant and bear repeating again and again. He said then:

“The choice is ours ... 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 embedded in the name given to this institution — the United Nations.”
(A/64/PV. 3, p. 11)

During his final address to the United Nations as President of the United States, President Obama rejected the notion that the future favoured the strong. He believes Governments serve people, not the other way around. We know that citizens across the United States are joining the international community by increasingly voicing their disapproval and calling for the lifting of the unilateral sanctions.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines agrees with President Obama that we have made strides to better

align our actions with our ideas. In that connection, we recognize and commend the decision of the United States to abstain in the voting today. However, we believe that President Obama possesses executive powers that will allow him to further modify the regulations governing the blockade. Let us look to the future, keep pace with the times and heed the insistent and consistent voice of the international community. Resolution 71/5 is a matter of moral rectitude and of the well-being of approximately 12 million Cubans.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines enthusiastically voted in favour of resolution 71/5. We believe in change, and are encouraged by the abstention of the United States today. We live in renewed hope that next year there will be no need for us to vote on this resolution yet again.

Mr. Habib (Indonesia): Indonesia associates itself with the statements delivered earlier on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (see A/71/PV.32).

In the past year there have been positive developments between Cuba and the United States in relation to the embargo imposed in 1961. Some of the highlights include the restoration of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States and the first visit by a United States President to Cuba. At about this time last year, the international community adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is premised on the commitment to leave no one behind. We hope that those events can serve as a foundation on which to build cooperation between the two countries and bring about inclusive and sustainable development.

Nevertheless, the long-standing embargo has remained, and therefore is still a concern here at the United Nations. The embargo has created endless economic and social hardship and suffering for the people of Cuba, especially for vulnerable groups, such as children and women. The blockade is also one of the main factors preventing Cuba from developing the full potential of its economy, while at the same time it has sapped Cuba's ability to promote the welfare of the Cuban people.

Furthermore, Indonesia believes that the imposition of an economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba contradicts the main principles of international law, including the principles of the sovereign equality of States and of non-intervention

and non-interference in another's domestic affairs. It also runs counter to international humanitarian law, the Charter of the United Nations and the norms and principles governing peaceful relations among States. More important, the application of the embargo goes against the spirit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the commitment to leave no one behind.

While welcoming the initial steps in the normalization of bilateral relations between Cuba and the United States, including the United States President's expression of willingness to work towards the lifting of the blockade, Indonesia believes that more needs to be done. In particular, steps should be taken to accelerate the process of repealing the laws and regulations that allow the United States embargo to take place.

Bearing in mind the considerations I mentioned, and fully taking into account Indonesia's cordial ties with, and strong support for, the Government and the people of Cuba, and of the United States, Indonesia would like to join other States Members of the United Nations in calling for the immediate cessation of the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. Indonesia therefore supported the adoption of the resolution 71/5.

Mr. Boukadoum (Algeria): We have heard so many voices from all over the world stating once again their firm stand against the continuation of the unjust economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed unilaterally on Cuba for more than half a century. Today there is almost unanimity among Member States in unequivocally calling for the lifting of the embargo.

Algeria considers Cuba more than just a friend that stood by it in dire times. Cuban doctors have shown their commitment and expertise well beyond their borders and, most recently, were at the forefront in fighting the Ebola virus epidemic. They did so on behalf of and for the sake of the whole international community, with no payback whatsoever.

Let me also state that we welcomed wholeheartedly the resumption of diplomatic relations between the United States of America and Cuba, and we likewise followed the bold decisions taken by President Obama before, during and after his trip to Cuba.

Today's abstention in the voting by the United States is extremely reassuring and positive. A few

steps are left to complete this historic effort — the total lifting of the embargo for the sake of the Cuban and the American peoples, but also for the sake of the whole world and the new opportunities that would thereby be opened.

In that regard, I sincerely commend Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla for this ground-breaking success. But I also want to stress the very encouraging and promising stand expressed by Ambassador Samantha Power on today's outcome (see A/71/PV.32). It is a success for everyone. Seldom do we have such near unanimity on any text in the United Nations. It is a victory for Cuba, but also for the United States — and, beyond that, for multilateralism.

Algeria is proud to have participated for years now in the formation of this consensus. May it be a good omen for other conflicting issues at the United Nations.

Mr. Zamora Rivas (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): El Salvador aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the Dominican Republic on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and the statement delivered by the representative of Thailand on behalf of the Group of 77 and China (see A/71/PV.32).

The Government of El Salvador sees the outcome of the voting this morning as positive. No country in the world expressed its opposition. This is a historic milestone in international politics. For that reason, we welcome this step forward, which we hope will lead to the total lifting of the embargo against Cuba as quickly as possible. Today the Government of Cuba can now say to its people and to all peoples that no Government in the world supports the embargo, including the Government that had initiated it. That is a huge achievement.

El Salvador respects the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and notes that they continue to be valid and must be respected by all Member States in the process of the changes we have initiated. The President of my own country, Salvador Sánchez Cerén, stated at the seventy-first session of the General Assembly:

“In the Americas, we have noted with satisfaction the progress made by Cuba and the United States in restoring their relations. However, we believe that this change will not bring the expected benefits to the people of both countries

if the economic embargo is not brought to an end.”
(A/71/PV.14, p.11)

El Salvador commends the efforts made in the context of restoring diplomatic ties between the two countries, including the reopening of embassies, the visit to Cuba by President Obama in March, the resumption of regular ties between the two countries, the adoption of measures on the use of the United States dollar in international transactions and the amendments enacted by the Department of the Treasury and the Department of Commerce of the United States to some of the regulations governing the embargo. However, although these measures constitute welcome steps, they are limited and modify only some aspects of the embargo.

The opening of the relationship between the two countries is a clear anomaly for the international community. However, the opening of international relations means the recognition of each other's sovereignty, signifying friendship between them. That is incompatible with one of those countries continuing an embargo against the other, causing unnecessary and unjust difficulties and distress for the people.

I think it worth pointing out that, despite these measures, Cuba, through perseverance and determination, has been able to overcome in an exemplary manner the obstacles and adversities standing in its way. El Salvador applauds the progress that Cuba has made in strengthening its economy and improving its productive processes. Under the blockade, the effects on the Cuban people in the areas of nutrition, health and education are glaringly obvious. At the same time, Cuba continues to be prevented from freely exporting and importing products and services to and from the United States. It cannot have direct banking relationships with this country, nor can it receive United States investment in other sectors of the economy, apart from the telecommunications sector. The upsurge of the embargo is reflected in the imposition of fines running into the millions of dollars meted out against banks and financial institutions that maintain links with Cuba, as well as in the bias against international financial transactions that include Cuba.

El Salvador calls for a complete end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo that persists against Cuba, because not only is it unjust and illegal, but it also lacks the international community's support. In that regard, El Salvador reiterates the importance of

compliance with the provisions of resolution 47/19, adopted on 24 November 1992, and compliance with all the subsequent relevant resolutions adopted by the Assembly year after year, up to the present, that have emphasized the necessity of ending this embargo.

Finally, the Government of El Salvador reiterates the three aspirations that are cherished not just by the Cuban people, but also by our own peoples and Governments. First, the Government of the United States will unilaterally lift the embargo. Secondly, dialogue between Cuba and the United States will continue. Thirdly, after so many years, all the peoples of the Americas, without exception, will be able to sit at the same table.

Mr. Raja Zaib Shah (Malaysia): Malaysia aligns itself with the statements delivered by representatives on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Group of 77 and China, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (see A/71/PV.32).

The General Assembly has consistently adopted the draft resolution on this subject by an overwhelming majority since it was first submitted in 1992. For more than 24 years, the Assembly has demanded an unconditional lifting of the embargo that has caused enormous suffering and untold hardship for the Cuban people. The nearly unanimous recorded vote this year clearly demonstrates the concerted international stand of 191 countries with Cuba on the annual draft resolution calling for an immediate end to the embargo against that country. The unilateral action in question runs counter to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The General Assembly has always reiterated its rejection of coercive measures that could adversely affect the socioeconomic development of developing countries. The continued existence of the embargo undermines multilateralism and the credibility of the United Nations.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the General Assembly in 2015, includes a paragraph urging Member States to refrain from applying unilateral financial and commercial measures that run counter to the principles of the United Nations and international law, especially to developing countries. An immediate end to the embargo is critical to improving the living standards of the Cuban people, particularly in view of the 2030 Agenda theme of leaving no one behind.

Malaysia welcomes the restoration of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States and the lifting of restrictions on travel and remittances. We also welcome the recent visit by President Obama to Cuba in March.

Malaysia applauds the United States for its decision today to abstain in the voting on resolution 71/5, which is a step in the right direction. We acknowledge that much remains to be done. We encourage the United States and Cuba to continue to engage in an open and constructive dialogue, which must be conducted with mutual respect and without any preconditions.

Malaysia firmly believes that the complete lifting of the embargo will not only significantly improve the quality of life and living standards of the Cuban people, but will also contribute to peace, security and stability in the Americas.

Mr. Shaltut (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, my delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the groups to which we belong (see A/71/PV.32).

My delegation has taken note of the report of the Secretary-General on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba (A/71/91), which was prepared pursuant to resolution 70/5, adopted in 2015.

My country welcomes the improved relations between the United States of America and Cuba, as evidenced in particular by the visit of President Barack Obama to Cuba in March and the steps taken by the United States Administration to amend several aspects of the embargo against Cuba, which we consider a step in the right direction. We are hopeful that further steps and measures will be taken with a view to lifting the embargo completely.

In line with the Charter of the United Nations and international human rights law, Libya has never implemented any of the laws or measures referred to in paragraphs 2 and 3 of resolution 71/5. My country fully believes that the only way to settle differences between countries is through peaceful means and that imposing unilateral measures against countries runs contrary to the Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Such measures constitute an obstacle to, and disrupt the process of, the development and prosperity of nations. They stand in the way of achieving the

Sustainable Development Goals, which the General Assembly adopted unanimously one year ago.

For all of those reasons, my country voted in favour of the resolution 70/5. We believe that such unilateral measures must not be reproduced in the future.

Ms. Scott (Namibia): Namibia would like to join other delegations in congratulating the Cuban delegation on the vote.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of Venezuela on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), of the Niger on behalf of the Group of African States, and of Thailand on behalf of the Group of 77 and China (see A/71/PV.32).

We would like to take this opportunity to commend Cuba for its humanitarian and other assistance to many developing countries, including Haiti and Namibia. Namibia thanks the Secretary-General for his report (A/71/91) on the implementation of resolution 70/5. We want to say that we indeed welcome the statement made this morning by the representative of the United States of America (see A/71/PV.32)

The title of this agenda item — “Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba” — says it all. Other words related to “necessity” include “inevitable”, “obligation” and “stipulation”. As was highlighted in the statement made on behalf of NAM, the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba is contrary to international law and the Charter of the United Nations. It is disheartening that, after 54 years, the embargo policy against Cuba has yet to end.

Namibia understands that the United States holds the law in the highest regard. We need therefore to ask that country, following the visit in March by His Excellency Mr. Barack Obama, President of the United States: was the international community remiss in believing that this senseless embargo would have been lifted by now? Namibia was hopeful when Cuba was removed from the list of State sponsors of terrorism, on which Cuba should have never been placed in the first place.

Yet the embargo remains very much in place, as the Secretary-General’s report indicates. The report also states clearly that, despite a number of amendments to regulations that keep the policy in place, the economic

hardship imposed by the United States has not come to an end. The report states, on page 27, that financial and extraterritorial aspects of the embargo have been further intensified under the Trading with the Enemy Act of 1917.

Based on the logic of law, it is not understandable or logical that the United States should continue to regard Cuba as an enemy. Furthermore, it is not clear why the blockade against Cuba was further strengthened through the imposition of fines, in excess of \$13.2 billion, on those entities having relations with Cuba.

The establishment of diplomatic relations is an important first step towards the normalization of relations between Cuba and the United States. We have been greatly encouraged by recent diplomatic talks and by the policies of rapprochement adopted by the United States with regard to Cuba. We would also encourage

determined progress towards the further easing of the remaining restrictions in the areas of travel and telecommunications, as well as remittances.

Namibia urges the Government of the United States of America to fully normalize relations with the Republic of Cuba by lifting all unilateral coercive measures, not only owing to their illegality but also because of humanitarian considerations. We look forward to the ending of the economic, commercial and financial embargo.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 39.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 4.10 p.m.