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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by the Europe-Third World Centre (CETIM), a non-governmental organization in general consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[15 August 2017]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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For the Respect of the Right of the Cuban People to Decide Its Future and for the Lifting of the United States Embargo against Cuba¹

1. The CETIM is extremely preoccupied by the unilateral, illegal and illegitimate embargo imposed by the United States on Cuba for more than 55 years, provoking numerous violations of the Cuban people's human rights. This embargo has recently been reinforced by the new U.S. administration.

2. On 16 June 2017 in Miami, the U.S. president, Donald Trump, announced his decision to reconsider – in the next 90 days – certain measures taken by his predecessor and to impose a turnaround in the relations that his administration will carry on with Cuba. The process of rapprochement between the two countries, following the 17 December 2014 joint declaration by Presidents Barack Obama and Raúl Castro, in conformity with the United Nations Charter's objectives and principles and which had led to the 20 July 2015 re-establishment of diplomatic relations and the beginning of ties of respect and cooperation between their governments and their peoples, has been overturned. Thus, there has been a cancellation of the presidential decree of 14 October 2016, which did not renounce the intention of fomenting a change of Cuba's system, yet recognized the failure of the means used by Washington as well as the sovereignty of the Cuban people and the legitimacy of its government. The bilateral negotiations held over three years, having allowed real advances (such as the opening of embassies, migration accords, security cooperation...) and moved toward normalization, now enter a *de facto* regressive phase. The motives invoked by President Trump are bellicose, anachronistic, and interventionist: they make reference both to U.S. defense interests against "communist oppression" and to the reaffirmed willingness of the White House to interfere in the domestic affairs of the people of Cuba to determine, in their place, the political and socio-economic institutions that these people should adopt. For all the peoples of the world who demand the respect of their right to self-determination, this is absolutely unacceptable.

3. President Trump, in a difficult situation since his inauguration, contested at home for his antisocial policies by an opposition which shows no signs of weakening (and included members of the Republican Party), criticized just about everywhere abroad, especially for his migration and environmental policies, scorning his neighbors and all of humanity, has entrusted the Cuban file to the most hateful and vindictive fringes of the electorate. In Miami, the public on 16 June at the Manuel Artime theater (named after the former mercenary for the *Brigade 2506* that tried, in vain, to invade Playa Girón in April 1961 to overthrow the government resulting from the 1959 revolution) was, notably, not composed of only U.S. ultra-reactionaries led by Senator Marco Rubio, Representative Mario Díaz-Balart and Florida Governor Rick Scott. Among them were also many fanatic extreme-right Cuban exiles calling for sanctions, including, apparently, (and the Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez has defied President Trump to deny it) former torturers from the Fulgencio Batista government and individuals known to the U.S. Justice Department for having committed terrorist acts against Cuba. This presidential order was imposed under the influence of this handful of persons steeped in the obscurantism of a bygone age, against the opinion of a clear majority of U.S. citizens in search of – finally – peaceful relations with Cuba. And contrary to what President Trump seems to believe, surrounded as he is by inept advisors –, the Cuban community living in the United States, in the circumscriptions (particularly in Florida) where it is most numerous, did not vote for him in the majority in the 2016 election. This, however, alters only slightly President Trump's credibility.

4. Nonetheless, there remains the new *National Security Presidential Memorandum on Strengthening the Policy of the United States Toward Cuba*, signed 16 June 2017, which provides for stronger actions against removing the embargo (*de facto* blockade), whereas on 26 October 2016, in the name of her country and for the very first time, the U.S. ambassador Samantha Power had abstained from voting at the United Nations General Assembly. The mechanism planned by the Trump administration is intended to strike the motors of the socialist economy by prohibiting any activity by U.S. companies with Cuban companies linked to the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) and the Ministry of the Interior. It especially targets the conglomerate GAESA (*Grupo de Administración Empresarial S.A.*), on which depend, among others, Gaviota (tourism), Antex (joint ventures agency), Cimex (import/export), AUSA (port of

¹ Declaration written in collaboration with Dr. Rémy Herrera, researcher at the CNRS, Paris.

Maríel), as well as companies in the energy, industrial, real estate, infrastructure, banking and finance, and even agricultural and technological sectors. The purpose is aggression against Cuba by depriving its economy of the maximum of foreign exchange income.

5. By attacking public business enterprises, these measures will also affect the entire economy, including the private sector. They clearly represent a strengthening of the U.S. blockade against Cuba. For more than 25 years, this blockade has been condemned by the quasi-unanimity of the member states of the United Nations General Assembly. In spite of repeated injunctions of the United Nations, it continues, imposed by the unilateral, but isolated, will of the U.S. government. First imposed in 1962, this blockade was aggravated by the 1992 Torricelli law and the 1996 Helms-Burton law. Although somewhat eased under Obama's mandates, the essence and the bulk of the blockade remain in force. According to Cuban sources, the losses associated to this blockade exceed 100 billion dollars. It restrains exports, tourism, direct foreign investment, and foreign exchange transfers. It also affects the pharmaceutical industry and biotechnology, where Cuba has immense attractive potential and many patents. Cruel and inhuman, it especially costs the Cuban people immeasurable sacrifices, depriving them of the enjoyment of elementary human rights, including self-determination and the right to development. A human drama – which is the objective of the U.S. blockade – has been avoided only by the willingness of the Cuban state to maintain at any price its social model. The priority accorded by this state to human development explains the excellence of the health and educational statistical indicators in Cuba, in spite of extreme budgetary constraints. The extraterritoriality of the rules imposed on the international community by the U.S.' unilateral sanctions is a serious violation of the United Nations Charter. It violates the international humanitarian right, as well as the principle of state sovereignty, confirmed by the jurisprudence of the International Court of Justice, to decide in full freedom ones political, socio-economic and cultural system. It is contrary to the right to self-determination, depriving the Cuban people of their own means of subsistence. Illegal, illegitimate, it is tantamount to an act of undeclared war of the United States against Cuba. Its aim is to harm the physical and moral integrity of a people, to make it suffer as much as possible; for this, it could constitute a crime against humanity. It must cease immediately, unconditionally.

6. Moreover, the new *National Security Presidential Memorandum* accentuates further the restrictions on the freedom of movement of U.S. citizens: thus, traveling to the island is prohibited for individuals as tourists under the category "people-to-people exchanges," and greater control will be exercised over those traveling under another category. This is a violation of U.S. civil liberties.

7. The recent measures taken by President Trump also obviously harm U.S. companies. They close them absurdly from opportunities of multiple outlets in a near emerging economy in the agricultural, industrial and services sectors – in addition to running counter to the principles of free trade that the United States claims for itself and for the world. This will cost jobs and income for the U.S. workers – whereas candidate Trump had promised the contrary during his campaign – and will entail additional costs for taxpayers, through increased bureaucratic and authoritarian controls – as opposed to the ideas of "less administration and more efficiency" advocated by the new president. In short, these measures will be counterproductive and detrimental to the U.S. economy itself.

8. Added to this, the U.S. government is depriving itself of a neighbor partner, precious and prestigious for reinforcing regional stability in Latin America and the Caribbean. We know that the role of Cuba was fundamental, for example, in organizing the negotiations between the Colombian government and the FARC-EP, which were held in Havana and which finally led to a settlement of this more than half-a-century-old conflict. As a matter of fact, Washington is losing the opportunity to pursue cooperation with the Cuban government in fighting international terrorism, drug trafficking, human trafficking, cybercrime, and money laundering. It is unnecessary here to point out that the United States, whose violence has long been a way of life, is in a poor position to teach lessons of democracy or human rights to anybody.

9. It could not be otherwise: President Trump's brutal reversal has aroused a wave of protests in the United States, within the political class (and not only among the Democrats), in the business world (from representatives of the Chamber of Agriculture of Indiana, a major exporter of food products and where the vice-president Mike Pence comes from, to the Starwood hotel chain, which inaugurated a Sheraton in Cuba a year ago), as well in civil society whose many actors are today calling upon the government to reconsider its and see reason. Abroad, the condemnations came from all over: the governments of Canada, Venezuela, Bolivia, Russia, Belgium, among others. And innumerable expressions of sympathy have converged on Havana from all continents.

10. The Human Rights Council has several times condemned unilateral coercive measures. In its recent Resolution 34/13 of 24 March 2017, it called, for all states, “to refrain from imposing unilateral coercive measures, also urges the removal of such measures, as they are contrary to the Charter and norms and principles governing peaceful relations among States at all levels.” It also asks that they “to take effective administrative or legislative measures, as appropriate, to counteract the extraterritorial application or effects of unilateral coercive measures.”

11. For the above mentioned reasons, we speak out in favor once again taking the road of normalization of relations between the United States of America and the Republic of Cuba; this in conformity with the objectives and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. This implies the absolute respect of Cuba’s independence, of its people’s sovereignty, of its government’s legitimacy, of the inalienable right of every state to choose its political, socio-economic and cultural system without any interference, of the equality and of the reciprocity of its partners and of the entirety of existing international law. This also implies stopping programs (including educational ones) financed by the U.S. government subversive of the constitutional order in Cuba, as well as the lifting of the blockade and the paying of mutual reparations for property and holdings nationalized at the beginning of the revolution, the closing of the base at Guantánamo (a territory of lawlessness) occupied since the neocolonial period and the return to Cuba of this territory which is its own. This finally implies the recognition of Cuba’s right to self-determination and its choice of building a different society founded on peace, justice, equality and social progress; a society that its people and the government that it has freely established intend to be “socialist, democratic, prosperous and sustainable.”
