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## **EU Explanation of Vote – UN General Assembly: Embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba**

30.10.2024

New York

Press and information team of the Delegation to the UN in New York  
**30 October 2024, New York – European Union Explanation of Vote delivered by Hungary on behalf of the EU and its Member States at the 79th Session of the United Nations General Assembly on the "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba"**

Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The Candidate Countries North Macedonia\*, Montenegro\*, Serbia\*, Albania\* and Bosnia and Herzegovina\*, as well as San Marino align themselves with this statement.

Once again, I need to stress today our conviction that the economic, commercial, and financial embargo imposed by the United States on Cuba has a damaging impact on the economic situation of the country and negatively affects the living standards of the Cuban people. We should keep in mind that external trade and foreign investment, which are undermined by the embargo, can play a crucial role in setting the country on a path towards modernisation, reforms and sustainable growth, and help it overcome the economic hardship endured by the population. The EU considers therefore that lifting the embargo could make economic reforms more effective and facilitate the opening of the Cuban economy to the benefit of the Cuban people.

We remain concerned about the human rights situation in Cuba, in particular following the events of July 2021, about the severe judgments issued by Cuban Courts so far, and about the respect of civil and political rights. We therefore reiterate our call on the Cuban Government to fully grant its citizens internationally recognised civil, political and economic rights and freedoms - including freedom of assembly, freedom of expression and demonstration, and free access to information - to release all political prisoners and those arbitrarily detained, to ratify the UN Covenant for Civil and Political Rights and the Covenant for Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and to extend a standing invitation to all UN Special Procedures to visit Cuba. We strongly emphasize the importance of upholding the UN Charter and respecting the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all UN members and urged Cuba to stand in full solidarity with these fundamental principles and work together for their defence. We further believe that empowering civil society is essential for the promotion and protection of all human rights, and call upon the Cuban Government to open spaces for a constructive and inclusive dialogue, without preconditions, with

the whole spectrum of civil society actors on the island. A broad spectrum of civil society, both Cuban and European, should also be involved in the implementation of the EU-Cuba Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement (PDCA).

The EU believes that positive change in Cuba is best brought about by closer engagement at all levels – government, economy, civil society, but also through people-to-people exchanges. We therefore welcome any measures to ease restrictions on family remittances and travel to the island and to ensure the availability of full consular services. The re-designation of Cuba as a state sponsor of terrorism (SST) by the previous US Administration without presenting any new facts, and its maintenance on the list until today without obvious justification, has introduced additional obstacles to international financial transactions with the island. We call thus for its removal. Moreover, the embargo continues to restrict Cuba's ability to import, among others, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, and other medical supplies.

Beyond the damaging impact of the embargo and the SST listing on ordinary Cubans, US sanctions and other administrative and judicial measures are also negatively affecting EU economic interests.

We have firmly and continuously opposed any such measures, due to their extraterritorial application and impact on the European Union, in violation of commonly accepted rules of international trade. We cannot accept that such measures impede our economic and commercial relations with Cuba.

The EU strongly rejects the US activation of Title III and IV of the Helms-Burton Act in April 2019. This breaches the commitments made by the US in the US-EU agreements of 1997 and 1998. We will draw on all appropriate measures to address the effects of the Helms-Burton Act, including in relation to our WTO rights and through the use of the EU Blocking Statute, which protects against the extra-territorial application of those US sanctions to EU citizens, businesses and NGOs operating in Cuba.

Mr President,

For the EU, international cooperation, dialogue and closer - even critical - engagement are the way to go with Cuba. The provisional application of the EU-Cuba Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement (PDCA) is now in its seventh year. The Agreement has put our bilateral relationship on a new and solid legal footing and sets out an agenda of constructive but critical engagement with Cuba that will also allow us to support and accompany Cuba on its path of reform and modernisation.

We are enhancing dialogue and cooperation also on issues on which we still have fundamental differences. To this end, the PDCA includes a human rights dialogue, which is a key pillar of our relationship. The fourth formal meeting of the dialogue was held on 24 November 2023, and resulted in the agreement of 4 initial outcomes, including the discussion of potential cooperation projects in various areas of human rights, including food, housing, health care, energy, culture, environment, climate

change, citizen's participation, attention to persons or groups in vulnerable situations and the accepted recommendations of the Universal Period Review, among others. The next meeting is expected to initiate a new cycle of political dialogues in 2025.

Following the adoption of the country's new Constitution, and to overcome the current economic and social crisis, we call on Cuba to ensure that its reform agenda extends economic, judicial and social reforms and is implemented in a manner that addresses the key concerns of the Cuban population, as well as meeting the legitimate democratic aspirations of the Cuban people for more opportunities to participate in the shaping of the country's future.

With the EU-Cuba Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement, the EU offers Cuba a consistent and reliable partnership to support it as it seeks to reform its political and economic model, to pursue sustainable development, and to find common solutions to global challenges, while continuing to advocate democracy and respect for human rights, in the exclusive interest of all Cuban citizens.

It is our considered view that the US embargo and connected measures do not contribute to promoting these aims. On the contrary, they impede their achievement. Against this background, the Member States of the European Union voted unanimously in favour of the draft resolution.

Thank you.

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*\* North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.*