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CUBA

**FOSTERING OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION
FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES IN THE FIELD OF CHEMICAL ACTIVITIES
(ITEM 18 OF THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA)**

Difficulties and obstacles encountered by Cuba affecting the full implementation of Article XI of the Chemical Weapons Convention

The economic, commercial, and financial embargo imposed by the Government of the United States of America (hereinafter “the United States”) against Cuba for over 60 years is the most complex and prolonged system of unilateral coercive measures ever imposed against any country.

Since 2019, the Government of the United States escalated its application of the embargo policy against our country to an even more cruel and inhumane extent by opportunistically intensifying said measures to unprecedented levels within the context of the pandemic caused by the coronavirus illness (COVID-19).

The embargo is a massive, flagrant, and systematic violation of the human rights of all Cubans. In a ruthless act of cruelty, the United States has imposed during this period, with surgical precision, measures aimed at affecting the most sensitive sectors of Cuban society to foment despair among the people.

This has resulted in the progressive and systematic increase in the aggression of the United States policy against our people, and against sovereign States that maintain or intend to establish economic, commercial, and financial relations with Cuba. The intensification of the embargo against Cuba to extreme levels has presented a substantial challenge for our country and has generated significant shortages for the Cuban people. The considerable extra-territorial effects have hindered the country’s economic and technological development.

The embargo generates distrust in and uncertainty surrounding United States financial institutions, businesses, and suppliers due to the real fear of being penalised for any connections with Cuba.

The extraterritorial restrictions and laws of the Government of the United States against Cuba violate Article XI of the Convention, which stipulates that the States commit to “[...] facilitate, and have the right to participate in, the fullest possible exchange of chemicals, equipment and scientific and technical information relating to the development and application of chemistry for purposes not prohibited under this Convention” and to “not maintain among themselves any restrictions, [...] which would restrict or impede trade and the development and promotion of scientific and technological knowledge in the field of chemistry for industrial, agricultural, research, medical, pharmaceutical, or other peaceful purposes [...]”.



It is neither conceivable nor acceptable, and it is contrary to international law, for the United States to limit, restrain, and even prohibit in many cases, the free exchange of chemicals, equipment, and scientific and technical information in the field of chemistry for peaceful purposes between Cuba and other States Parties, which constitutes, without exception, the right of all.

What effects does the embargo have on Cuba's national implementation of Article XI of the Convention with regard to the economic and technological development of the States Parties?¹

The damages accumulated in over 60 years of the embargo against Cuba are reaching USD 154,217,000,000 at current prices; against the value of gold, they are rising to more than USD 1.391 trillion.

In the first 14 months under President Joseph Biden, the damages caused by the embargo reached USD 6,364,000,000—more than USD 15 million per day. Between August 2021 and February 2022, a new record was set, with losses coming to USD 3,806,000,000 in just seven months.

The economic, commercial, and financial embargo imposed against Cuba continues to hinder the development of all of the potential of the Cuban economy, for the implementation of the National Plan for Economic and Social Development of the country, as well as for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals set in the 2030 Agenda.

The blockade significantly limits and restrains the maintenance, sustainability, development, and modernisation of the country's industrial chemistry sector. The most substantial effects include the supply of raw materials, equipment, and spare parts destined for industrial use, as well as the development of export operations. This policy has also generated losses related to geographical relocation for businesses, as well as monetary and financial effects.

The following are among the examples of damages resulting from the embargo policy within the field of chemistry in Cuba between January 2021 and February 2022:

- The intimidating effect of the embargo and persecution of Cuban financial transactions abroad has been a major obstruction in receiving equipment and consumables for medical use in the country—in line with the use of chemistry for purposes that are not prohibited—to the point where it has hindered commercial relations with a number of regular partners and suppliers. This situation has resulted in considerable extra costs, numerous shortages, and supply issues within the national health system.
- Within the context of COVID-19, it has become necessary to urgently obtain reagents, polymerase chain reaction (PCR) kits, and other materials—not only for diagnosing said illness, but also for researching vaccine candidates and producing Cuban vaccines. This, combined with the refusal of traditional suppliers to provide parts and other raw materials to Cuba as a result of the intensification of the embargo, has forced Cuban businesses to obtain these products through intermediaries, which comes with a substantial increase in

¹ Taken from the document updating the response of Cuba included in the Secretary-General's report, entitled: Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba – Item 36 (A/76/405). These reports include the primary effects caused by the embargo against Cuba in the period between January 2021 and February 2022, as well as some additional dates. Available in A/77.358 and A/76/405.

cost. For this reason alone, the Center of Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, the manufacturer of Cuba's Abdala COVID-19 vaccine, reported losses of USD 580,461,061.

- During the largest peak of the pandemic in the country in 2021, not one measure was taken to alleviate the embargo. This policy hindered the arrival of donations: the acquisition of cylinders, spare parts, and other components necessary for the provision of medicinal oxygen. Moreover, the purchase and transport of critical materials for the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of this illness, as well as for the research, production, and evaluation of vaccine candidates and Cuban vaccines against COVID-19.
- For the Finlay Vaccine Institute, the producer of the Soberana 02 and Soberana Plus vaccines, the imposition of the embargo policy resulted in difficulties with 20 business operations, 11 of which involved consumables, 6 involved reagents, and 3 involved equipment made by manufacturers based in the United States.
- Cuba is capable of producing more than 60% of its essential medicines; nevertheless, that level could not be guaranteed for months due to the impact of the embargo on the country's ability to make payments, the inability to access medical technologies using over 10% of components produced in the United States, the need to resort to alternative transit routes—which involved incurring increased additional costs—and the increased number of refusals by financial and banking institutions in a variety of countries to handle business operations with Cuba, which made it difficult to execute transactions with the suppliers of these consumables.
- The above illustrates how it is impossible to purchase insulin from the Danish company Novo Nordisk given the refusal of a Danish bank to accept the bank transfers. The bank alleged that it could not receive funds coming from Banco Financiero Internacional, because it is a Cuban business under sanctions by the Office of Foreign Assets Control.
- Eight Cuban children with different types of cancer were not able to receive the most suitable chemotherapy treatment for their illnesses and had to repeat substandard protocols due to the obstacles imposed by the embargo, which blocks access to pharmaceuticals.
- Effects concerning healthcare for expectant mothers have also been registered, as the research and welfare activities of cytogenetic laboratories across the country have been affected by difficulties in acquiring equipment and reagents that are vitally important for the prevention and detection of chromosomal illnesses.
- The Medical Product Import-Export Enterprise (MediCuba) contacted companies based in the United States to explore possibilities for importing equipment, devices, medication, and other consumables necessary for healthcare for the Cuban people within the national public health system. In particular, a request was made for horizontal centrifuges: medical equipment in which samples are spun to accelerate the decanting or sedimentation of its components or states (generally a solid or liquid), according to its density; it is not possible to acquire this kind of equipment due to the imposition of the embargo.
- The Cuban enterprise Acinox Comercial does not have access to multinational United States-owned companies with a strong presence on the metallurgy market. It is also unable to purchase the raw materials, spare parts, and metals needed for its operations directly from the United States; this results in a 15% increase in costs, as it must resort to purchases from Asia or Europe. Over the period covered in this document, imports were made

amounting to USD 20,147,095.62—which could have been USD 3,022,064.34 less if it had been possible to purchase these products on the United States market.

- The production of clinker for export was strongly affected by the instability in the supply of combustible petroleum coke, due to the sanctions imposed in recent years against the companies that supply combustibles to Cuba.
- Although the United States is the largest global producer and exporter of sulfuric acid, Cuba must acquire this product through Canadian ports. Estimated damages of approximately 20% in additional freight costs were the result, equivalent to USD 5,041,000.
- The restrictions placed on Cuban IP addresses under the embargo make it impossible to access a variety of websites for consultation, technical forums, and websites that provide training for IT personnel or provide online information, classes, and workshops—this all has a negative effect on Cuba’s chemical industry.

Why should the States Parties get involved in guaranteeing an end to this type of unilateral measure, which is contrary to the Convention?

The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has an important mandate to promote the economic and technological advancement of the States Parties, especially those that are less developed. Within this context, the Organisation and its States Parties have the important responsibility of guaranteeing the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of Article XI.

The unilateral prohibitions and restrictions stemming from the embargo against Cuba are clearly incompatible with the provisions of the Convention. It is the obligation of the States Parties to achieve its object and purpose, including the elimination of these kinds of measures. Cuba reiterates its strong commitment to the strict implementation of all of the aspects of the Convention and calls for the unilateral and unconditional lifting of the United States embargo—which includes the field of chemistry—in compliance with the 30 resolutions approved by the international community at the General Assembly of the United Nations, where the overwhelming majority has asked to put an end to this absurd policy.