



**Contribution to the Report of the UN Secretary-General on the implementation of General Assembly Resolution on the “Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba”**

13 February 2026

1. This contribution by the South Centre is submitted in response to the request of the UN Secretary-General as an input to the Secretary-General’s report pursuant to UN General Assembly resolution 80/4 (A/RES/80/4), concerning the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba, in violation of the basic purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

2. The South Centre joins the international community in condemning the unilateral coercive measures imposed against Cuba, which are contrary to the fundamental principles of sovereignty, self-determination and international cooperation. The recent escalation of the blockade with the explicitly stated aim of regime change<sup>1</sup> violates the fundamental right of peoples to self-determination, their right to determine their own political status, and to freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

**Recent developments**

3. In January 2026, the U.S. President issued an Executive Order declaring that Cuba posed a threat to its national security and foreign policy and therefore proclaimed a national emergency in that regard. This represents a dangerous escalation of the blockade with serious implications for Cuba's national security, the Latin American and Caribbean region, as well as the entire international community, as it further undermines the legitimacy and credibility of a rules-based international order anchored in the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

4. The South Centre expresses grave concern regarding the threats of the use of force and economic coercion to completely block the oil supply to Cuba and suffocate its people, which threatens their sovereignty and energy security. Such actions constitute serious violations of the UN Charter, including the principles of sovereign

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<sup>1</sup> José de Córdoba, Vera Bergengruen, and Deborah Acosta, The U.S. Is Actively Seeking Regime Change in Cuba by the End of the Year, Wall Street Journal, 22 January 2026. Available from <https://www.wsj.com/world/americas/the-u-s-is-actively-seeking-regime-change-in-cuba-by-the-end-of-the-year-1d0f178a>

equality, non-interference in internal affairs, and the prohibition on the threat or use of force in international relations.

5. These developments further aggravate the Cuban economy and its humanitarian situation. Unless oil deliveries resume, the Cuban people will face even sharper deprivations, with much of the country already suffering, at the time of writing this document, near-daily blackouts lasting most of the day<sup>2</sup> which severely restrict the daily lives of Cubans. This threat to the energy security of Cuba negatively impacts every sphere of life in the country, including electricity generation, transportation, industrial and agricultural production, health services, the water supply, educational institutions and many more.

### **Multidimensional impacts of the blockade**

6. The economic impact of the long-standing US blockade has been tremendous, impacting Cuba as well as its commercial partners around the world. Between 1 March 2024 and 28 February 2025, the material economic damage to Cuba caused by the blockade is estimated by Cuban authorities at US\$ 7.5 billion, representing a 49 percent increase as compared to the previous year.

7. In June 2025, the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4) adopted a renewed global framework for financing for development for improving access to and unlocking additional and innovative financial resources for realizing sustainable development. Yet, the blockade undermines the very resolve of the *Compromiso de Sevilla* as it impedes Cuba's effective engagement with the international financial system, limiting access to international banking and financial institutions. The financial isolation experienced by Cuba due to the blockade has prevented those institutions from conducting transactions with Cuban entities. It also restricts Cubans from receiving remittances from abroad, forcing a shift to more expensive, informal channels for such essential financial transfers.

8. The blockade has dramatically limited Cuba's international trade relations and curtailed access to suppliers of goods and services that are essential for sustainable development. It prevents the country from improving and expanding its productive capacities and from advancing efforts for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

9. There is not a single sector of Cuba's social and economic life that escapes the effects of the blockade. Over 80 percent of the Cuban population has been born and lived under the constant siege of this blockade, which directly affects their well-being, quality of life and fundamental rights. This creates, in particular, systematic barriers for Cuban youth who are condemned to grow up in a context of externally caused deprivation.

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<sup>2</sup> Jude Webber, Joe Daniels and Lauren Fedor, Cuba has '15 to 20 days' of oil left as Donald Trump turns the screws, Financial Times, 29 January 2026. Available from <https://www.ft.com/content/f15ac8c6-c76b-40a1-bb41-95abbed7d8aa>

10. The blockade's acute impacts are most plainly visible in the chronic scarcity of essential products, such as foodstuffs and medicines, which particularly affects the most vulnerable populations. Due to the blockade, the Cuban people are faced with a severe lack of access to international markets, limiting the availability of essential products for the daily lives of citizens. Limiting the availability of nutritious foods, medicines and developmental opportunities to the entire population essentially reflects punishment imposed on the whole Cuban society.

11. Moreover, the blockade is a significant barrier to the urgent needs of Cuba to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change and to deal with the associated losses and damages, while being deprived of access to relevant clean energy technologies and technical assistance. As a small island developing state in the Caribbean, Cuba ranks among the countries most exposed to climate impacts, such as hurricanes, droughts, floods and rising sea levels, with multidimensional impacts on its agriculture, forestry and tourism, all key sectors for the Cuban economy.

### **Impact on the health sector**

12. For decades, Cuba has been renowned for its free healthcare, advanced national pharmaceutical industry and international deployment of trained medical doctors. The blockade has decimated Cuba's self-sufficiency in the medical sector, with the people suffering from a critical lack of basic medications. The blockade has continually impeded access not only to essential medicines and medical devices, but even the raw materials needed to produce hundreds of critical medicines<sup>3</sup>. Cuban hospitals are routinely finding it impossible to obtain lifesaving medicines, with the blockade directly contributing to patient mortality.

13. Nearly 20 years ago, the American Association for World Health had clearly stated that the blockade had restricted the Cuban healthcare system to such an extent as to deny life-saving medicines to ordinary citizens. It added that "a humanitarian catastrophe has been averted only because the Cuban government has maintained a high level of budgetary support for a healthcare system designed to deliver primary and preventive healthcare to all of its citizens"<sup>4</sup>. The costs of the blockade on Cuba's health and other critical sectors have only grown since then, exacting a tragic human toll on the country. Despite this, and thanks to the efforts made over decades, Cuba's life expectancy is among the highest in Latin America and is comparable to or higher than that of the United States.

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<sup>3</sup> Bitter pill: Cuba runs low on life-saving medicines, France24, 9 July 2025. Available from <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20250709-bitter-pill-cuba-runs-low-on-life-saving-medicines>

<sup>4</sup> American Association for World Health (AAWH), Denial of Food and Medicine: The Impact of the U.S. Embargo on Health and Nutrition in Cuba, March 1997. Available from <https://www.american.edu/centers/latin-american-latino-studies/upload/impact-of-us-embargo-on-health-nutrition-in-cuba-1997.pdf>

## **Extraterritorial effects and impact on third countries**

14. The blockade against Cuba has not only damaged the economic, commercial, and financial ties between Cuba and the United States, but also impacts the rest of the international community. The sprawling framework of punitive laws making up the blockade is aimed at damaging Cuba's economic and commercial relations with every other country in the world. This reflects an utter disregard for the sovereign rights of countries and their citizens and impedes the development of friendly relations between nations.

15. For instance, under a recent Executive Order by the U.S. President, additional tariffs can be imposed on the U.S. imports of foreign goods from countries that directly or indirectly sell or otherwise provide any oil to Cuba<sup>5</sup>. This represents a significant expansion of secondary sanctions and the use of trade remedies as tools of geoeconomic coercion, directly targeting the countries that maintain lawful and legitimate commercial relations with Cuba.

16. The US has also imposed restrictions on government officials and people from other countries who have facilitated Cuban medical missions, even while executing their official duties. These missions have played an important role in addressing critical gaps in healthcare availability in developing and even some developed countries, providing trained medical professionals for enabling access to healthcare for people, especially in rural areas.

## **Cuba's continued commitment to multilateralism and international cooperation**

17. Despite this adverse situation, Cuba has continued to demonstrate its firm commitment to multilateralism and international solidarity through its active participation in South-South and triangular cooperation, which has enabled it to collaborate with other countries in developing solutions to global challenges. Cuba's initiatives to promote international cooperation in the field of health have benefited numerous countries around the world, including some advanced economies.

18. Cuba has deployed around 24,000 doctors for providing medical services in 56 countries, many of which are low-income nations with limited availability of medical services<sup>6</sup>. In contrast, the U.S. contributed less than 0.22 percent of its GDP to official aid in 2024, and since then has completely dismantled its institutional architecture for development assistance. As the blockade has cost Cuba \$7.5 billion between March 2024 and February 2025, without this burden the country could potentially have doubled its contributions to supporting international cooperation for development.

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<sup>5</sup> U.S. President, Executive Order, Addressing Threats to the United States by the Government of Cuba, White House, 29 January 2026. Available from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2026/01/addressing-threats-to-the-united-states-by-the-government-of-cuba/>

<sup>6</sup> Bert Wilkinson, Caribbean leaders oppose US policy targeting Cuban medical missions, saying they're critical, Associated Press, 11 March 2025. Available from <https://apnews.com/article/cuban-medical-missions-caribbean-50d1c8eefb14ceee1caf983e9a8e4edb>

## Conclusion

19. The South Centre reaffirms that the continuation of the economic, financial and commercial blockade against Cuba for more than six decades is incompatible with a multilateral system based on international law, the UN Charter, and the fundamental principles of respect for the sovereignty of States and international cooperation. These measures constitute a clear and flagrant violation of fundamental human rights, including the right to development, and represent an obstacle to the peaceful coexistence of nations.

20. In this context, it is useful to recall U.S. President Woodrow Wilson's stated position in 1916, that "The United States does not recognize the right of any foreign power to impose barriers to the exercise of the commercial rights of non-interested nations, by using the blockade when there is no state of war"<sup>7</sup>. A century later, in 2016, another U.S. President had normalised relations with Cuba, acknowledging that "what the United States was doing was not working. We have to have the courage to acknowledge that truth. A policy of isolation designed for the Cold War made little sense in the 21st century. The blockade was only hurting the Cuban people instead of helping them"<sup>8</sup>. Another decade later, in 2026, both these statements remain inherently true, yet observed more in their breach by the current U.S. administration.

21. The negative effects of the blockade are evident and constitute unacceptable obstacles to the sovereign right of Cuba to determine its own destiny and meet the needs and aspirations of its population. By ignoring the unequivocal position of the international community, expressed in successive resolutions of the UN General Assembly, including the most recent Resolution 80/4, the continued enforcement of the illegitimate economic, commercial, and financial blockade against Cuba subverts the post-1945 multilateral order and the rule of international law.

22. The situation of Cuba underscores the urgent need to dismantle all unilateral coercive measures that undermine sovereign rights, the realization of human rights, and the achievement of the SDGs. It is an essential precondition for a multilateral system based on cooperation, mutual respect, and the fulfilment of all human rights, including the right to development which will enable the realisation of a more just and equitable world. The South Centre calls on the Member States of the UN and all other stakeholders part of the international community to come together and act decisively for ending the unjust denial of Cuba's sovereignty, right to self-determination and sustainable development.

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<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Salim Lamrani, *The Economic War Against Cuba: A Historical and Legal Perspective on the U.S. Blockade*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 2013, p. 56.

<sup>8</sup> Remarks by President Obama to the People of Cuba, White House Archives, 22 March 2016. Available from <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/03/22/remarks-president-obama-people-cuba>