STATEMENT BY MR. D. RAJA, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, ON AGENDA ITEM 41 – ‘NECESSAITY OF ENDING THE ECONOMIC, COMMERCIAL AND FINANCIAL BLOCKADE AGAINST CUBA, AT THE 65TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 26, 2010

Mr. President, Distinguished delegates

India associates itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Yemen on behalf G-77 and also the statement made by the distinguished representative of Egypt on behalf of NAM. My delegation would like to thank the Secretary General for the comprehensive report on the agenda item under consideration today.

Mr. President,

This is the nineteenth year in succession that this Assembly is deliberating the almost five decade old economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on Cuba.
In all these years, this Assembly has repeatedly rejected the imposition of laws and regulations with extra-territorial impact and all other forms of coercive economic measures that hurt the progress and prosperity of the people the world over.

The General Assembly has also called upon all States to respect their obligations under the United Nations Charter and international law, as well as repeal and invalidate laws and measures that have “extra-territorial effects” on the sovereignty of other States and affect the legitimate interests of entities or persons under their jurisdiction and the freedom of trade and navigation.

Despite the repeated calls of the General Assembly, its resolutions remain unimplemented in contravention of world opinion. Such callous disregard of the will of the United Nations undermines the credibility of this august house and weakens multilateralism. More importantly, meanwhile, the Cuban people continue to face the hardships induced by the embargo in their daily lives.

The embargo and its extra-territorial aspects continue to remain in full force. In particular, domestic US laws like the Cuba Democracy Act of 1992 and the Helms-Burton Act of 1996 have enhanced the extra-territorial reach of the embargo, encompassing foreign companies as well as foreign subsidiaries of US companies doing business with Cuba or Cuban entities.

Mr. President,

The embargo, particularly through its extraterritorial effects, is adversely affecting the lives of the Cuban people and their efforts for the socio-economic development in their country. The embargo has denied Cuba access to US market, investment, technology, financial services and scientific, educational, cultural and sporting institutions.

Cuba has had to pay enormous extra cost, in the last five decades for sourcing products, technology and services from third countries located thousands of kilometers away. The extra-territorial application of the US embargo has discouraged investment, technology transfer and sale and other forms of business collaborations between Cuba and third countries.

Health care, one of the MDG commitments, is particularly affected due to denial of critical medical equipment, medicines, technologies and diagnostic aids to Cuban hospitals.
Cuba’s efforts to provide health assistance to fellow developing countries as part of South-South cooperation has also borne the brunt of the embargo, making this yet another unexpected negative extra-territorial impact of the embargo.

In the report of the Secretary General, various UN entities have detailed the impact of the embargo and its extra-territorial effects. The UN Resident Coordinator in Havana has noted the high cost and negative impact of the embargo on humanitarian and development cooperation implemented by the UN system in Cuba. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean has stated that the embargo considerably affects the standard of living of Cuban citizens and may threaten Cuba’s food security in the future. The UNDP has noted that the effects of the embargo can be observed in all spheres of Cuba’s social and economic activities including the lives of the most vulnerable. The UN Conference on Trade and Development states that the impact of the extraterritorial application is considerable owing to the significant US interests in transnational corporations.

In recent years, the financial, food and energy crises have made the impact of embargo even more acute.

Mr. President,

Geography has tied Cuba and the United States of America to maintain normal relations in trade and investment. Despite the embargo, the US continues to be a major source of food imports for Cuba, insofar as permitted by the US Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act of 2000. This only confirms the high potential for trade, commerce and investment between these countries.

People to people contact between the two countries remain severely curtailed. Lifting of US travel restrictions on Cuba would bring immense benefits to the Cuban tourism economy and to its people.

Congressional efforts in the United States to relax or lift the embargo and the substantial interest in the business sector for unhindered access to the Cuban market lend further credence to the UN annual resolutions calling for lifting of the US embargo against Cuba.

Before concluding, Mr. President, permit me to reiterate India’s opposition to unilateral measures by countries, which impinge on the sovereignty of another country, including attempts to extend the application of a country’s laws extraterritorially to other sovereign nations.

India joins other nations in calling for an immediate end to the US embargo against Cuba. India supports the resolution moved by Cuba.
Thank You.

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