

Cuba condemns terrorism and political manipulation

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs states its strong rejection of the slanderous inclusion of Cuba in a US State Department list of countries which are allegedly not cooperating fully with US efforts against terrorism that was made public on May 13, 2020 and that was strongly rejected by President Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez.

It is a unilateral and arbitrary listing without any base, authority or International support whatsoever which, as it is known, only aids to the intentions to defame and pressure countries refusing to bend to the will of the US government in their sovereign decisions.

The main argument given by the US government was the presence in Cuban territory of the members of the delegation to the peace talks of the National Liberation Army (ELN) of Colombia.

As it is widely known, the delegation to the peace talks of the National Liberation Army (ELN) of Colombia are in Cuba because Ecuador suddenly renounced to continue being the venue of such talks and, at the request of the Colombian government and the ELN, the venue for the peace process was transferred to Havana in May 2018.

These peace talks had begun on February 7, 2017 in Quito, Ecuador. Cuba, together with Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Venezuela and Norway, has been a Guarantor of the peace process as requested by the Parties.

After Mr. Iván Duque Márquez was inaugurated as president of Colombia on August 7, 2018, the representatives of his government, beginning on August 8 that year an until January 2019, had several exchanges with Cuba and the ELN delegation to the peace talks so as to continue the dialogues that had started during the Santos presidency --a process in which our country observed due discretion and acted strictly in its capacity as a guarantor.

Immediately after the bombing of the Police Cadet Academy in Bogota on January 17, 2019, the president of the Republic of Cuba and his minister of foreign affairs immediately expressed their condolences to the Colombian government and people and particularly to the relatives of the victims in the bombing, and they restated Cuba's strong position of rejecting and condemning all terrorist acts, methods and practices in all their forms and manifestations.

Then the Colombian government took political and legal actions against the ELN delegation to the peace talks that was in Cuba and stopped the peace dialogue. Additionally, it decided to ignore the Protocol in Case of Rupture, thus openly abandoning and violating the commitments made by that State with the other six nations that had signed it.

The Protocol in Case of Rupture was signed in the framework of the peace talks held by the government of Colombia, the ELN and the guarantor countries on April 5, 2016. It states the safe return of the guerrilla delegation to Colombia in the case there is a cease of talks.

The Cuban government has stated and it continues to state today that, based on the agreed documents, the Protocol should be implemented. Such stance, which is widely supported by the international community and by circles committed with reaching for a negotiated settlement to the Colombian armed conflict, is an accepted universal practice which has been repeatedly ratified as it abides by international law and the commitments of the country that is a guarantor and the venue of the talks. It is due to the non-implementation of this Protocol that the members of the ELN delegation to the peace talks are still in Cuba.

The Colombian government has embarked on a series of hostile actions against Cuba, including public statements, threats and summons, through an ungrateful and politically-motivated manipulation of the unquestionable contribution of Cuba to peace in Colombia. Among such actions, there was a change in the historical position of Colombia in support of the Resolution that has been passed every year in the United Nations General Assembly demanding an end to the US economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba which is bringing damages and suffering to our people. Such action ostensibly changed the consistent and

invariable position all Colombian governments had been assuming since 1992.

The same day the US announced Cuba had been included in the list of countries allegedly not cooperating fully with the US efforts against terrorism, the Colombian government's High Commissioner for Peace, Mr. Miguel Ceballos Arévalo, publicly stated that the decision by the State Department to include Cuba was a "recognition" of the government of Colombia and its "repeated request" that Cuba sends to it the members of the ELN delegation to the peace talks.

Those statements by Mr. Ceballos have been criticized in Colombia by many circles committed to peace and several Colombian politicians have demanded from the government an explanation about them and the way the Protocol in Case of Rupture is being ignored.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly rejects the statements of the Colombian high-ranking official.

What stems out of the comments by the High Commissioner for Peace is that the behavior of the government of Colombia has supported and facilitated the arguments for the aggressive aims of the United States against our nation and given its "recognition" to the infamous US actions against a Latin American and Caribbean nation.

Mentioning the presence of the ELN representatives in Cuba, on which the US accusation is based, is nothing but a senseless feeble and dishonest pretext facilitated by the ungrateful attitude of the government of Colombia –if Mr. Ceballos' statements are to be given any credit.

In any case, and even with that so-called assistance from the government of Colombia, the US accusation is totally and deliberately unfounded. There is concrete and, in some cases, very recent evidence of our bilateral collaboration with the United States in fighting terrorism and in joint law enforcement efforts and in actions of specific interest for the US, so the inclusion of Cuba in the list as announced by the State Department is a deliberate distortion of truth.

It must be remembered that Cuba as a country has been the target of many terrorist actions financed and carried out from US territory by groups and individuals who have enjoyed there the leniency and protection of the US government, a circumstance that is public knowledge. In the past, Cuba was also the victim of state terrorism perpetrated directly by the government of the United States, which sometimes acted in connivance with organized crime in that country. Due to such actions, 3478 Cubans have died and 2099 have been disabled in one way or another.

On April 30 last, the Embassy of Cuba in the United States was the target of a terrorist act. Since then, the US government has kept a complicit silence, without condemning or even rejecting such action, and it refrains from acting against terrorist individuals and groups based in US territory who are fueling violence against Cuba and its institutions.

As a result, after the terrorist attack against our diplomatic mission in Washington, threats have been made against the safety of Cuban diplomats and embassies both in the US itself and in Mexico, Costa Rica, Antigua & Barbuda, Canada, Cyprus, Austria and Angola, all of which has been reported to the respective government authorities.

The attitude of manifest complicity by the US government entails the peril of being taken as an approval of terrorism. It is consistent with the heightened policy of aggression and instigation to violence against Cuba, which has been expanded even to countries where Cuban health personnel are working under bilateral cooperation schemes.

Cuba's commitment with decisive actions against and condemnation of terrorism is enshrined in its Constitution. It is absolute and categorical as to opposing any form and manifestation of terrorism, particularly state terrorism, and that is described in the relevant laws. There are reasons in excess to doubt the US government can utter such a categorical statement on its stance toward terrorism.

Cuba has invariably supported peace in Colombia and worked as a guarantor for the implementation of the peace agreement between the Colombian government and the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces-People's Army (FARC-EP), even when the Colombian

government has not guaranteed protection for or ensured the strict implementation of such agreement.

As requested through diplomatic channels, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is asking the government of Colombia to explain its position as to the role of the guarantors of the Colombian peace process, particularly that of Cuba's.

Equally, it requires to be informed about the position of the government on the enforcement and implementation of the peace agreement between the government of Colombia and FARC-EP.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs urges the government of Colombia to state its official position as to its reasons concerning the inclusion of Cuba in the list made by the US State Department and explain which was the role and posture of its officials during the previous exchanges that took place with the US concerning such matter.

As a country which has been a victim of terrorism, Cuba deplors any form of manipulation and political opportunism when dealing on such a sensitive issue.

Havana, June 1, 2020