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"These are times to express solidarity and understand health as a right"

By: MINREX

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Statement by Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba, at the Twenty Fifth Ordinary Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Association of Caribbean States.

Honorable Senator Dr. Jerome Walcott, Justice of the Peace, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Barbados;

Dr. June Soomer, Secretary-General of the Association of Caribbean States;

Distinguished delegates and guests;

Excellencies:

First of all I would like to welcome the initiative of the Government of Barbados, in its condition as Chair of the Council of Ministers of the Association of Caribbean States, of convening this virtual meeting.

COVID-19, the epicenter of which has now moved to our region, generating a health crisis of huge proportions, is threatening the life of all of us, thus ratifying the need for cooperation and solidarity to confront the pandemic as well as the increasing challenges derived from the defying scenario that has been created

The Association generated actions aimed at coordinating our work to protect the health of our peoples. Particularly worth mentioning are those resulting from the First Extraordinary Meeting of Foreign and Health Ministers on COVID-19 and the First Regional technical Meeting of ACS Member States and Associate Members on COVID-19.

These are times to express solidarity and understand health as a right, a principle that encourages our country's cooperation in the face of an emergency. In keeping with this strong belief, Cuba has been responding to requests from several countries to mitigate COVID-19, in virtue of which Cuban health professionals and technicians have

travelled specifically to provide health care and advisory to 16 member States of the Association, who joined the medical brigades that had already been deployed there, thus increasing to 20 the number of ACS member States which are benefitting from the medical cooperation offered by Cuba.

Added to the challenge of preserving human life under the conditions imposed by the pandemic is the need to reactivate the economies of our nations, after the steep reduction of the productive, economic and commercial activities, which were already hardly hit by the international economic crisis, the negative effects of climate change, the occurrence of natural disasters and the terrible and unsustainable burden of the external debt that is inherent to the unjust international financial system.

Excellencies:

Even under the present circumstances, unilateral coercive measures continue to be applied, which are causing humanitarian damage and make it impossible for governments to acquire the medical equipment and pharmaceuticals necessary to treat the sick.

In the case of Cuba, the blockade has been further tightened; and the politically motivated campaign against Cuba's medical cooperation aimed at damaging these services that are currently benefitting thousands of persons has been further strengthened.

I would like to thank the Association and all its member States for opposing the irrational, illegal and cruel blockade policy against our people.

We hail the election of the Dominican Republic as President of the Executive Board of the Council of Ministers of the Association and appreciate the able conduct of this body by Barbados, as well as the effective performance of Dr. June Soomer.

We likewise welcome the new Secretary-General, knowing for sure that he will resort to his vast experience to successfully fulfill the mandates received from our Heads of State and/or Government.

To those who initiate their terms in such important positions, we express our willingness to continue contributing with the ACS. To those who conclude their mandate we express our gratitude.

We are sure that this important meeting will decisively contribute to that. Cuba will continue working in favor of that unity and for the consolidation of our Association.

Thank you, very much!

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