

**KEY ADDRESS BY THE HEAD OF THE CUBAN DELEGATION, YOUR
EXCELLENCE JOSÉ RAMÓN MACHADO VENTURA
TO THE HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON
WORLD FOOD SECURITY: THE CHALLENGES OF CLIMATE CHANGE
AND BIOENERGY. ACTIONS REQUIRED TO ATTAIN WORLDWIDE FOOD
SECURITY**

Mr. Chairman,

Twelve years ago, in this very hall, the international community agreed to eradicate world hunger. The aim to halve the number of malnourished people by 2015 was set. That modest and inadequate goal is bound to strike us as a pipe-dream today.

The world food crisis is not a circumstantial phenomenon. Their serious and recent manifestation, in a world that produces enough food for all its inhabitants, clearly reveals the systemic and structural nature of the crisis.

Hunger and malnourishment are the result of an international economic order that maintains and deepens poverty, inequality and injustice.

The North countries have an unquestionable share of responsibility for the hunger and malnourishment of 854 million people. They imposed commercial liberalization upon a world with patently unequal actors and advanced financial recipes calling for structural adjustments. They brought ruin to many small producers in the South and turned self-sufficient and even export nations into net importers of food products.

The governments of developed countries refuse to eliminate their outrageous agricultural subsidies while imposing their rules of international trade on the rest of the world. Their voracious transnational corporations set prices, monopolize technologies, impose unfair certification processes on trade and manipulate distribution channels, sources of financing, trade and supplies for the production of food worldwide. They also control transportation, scientific research, gene banks and the production of fertilizers and pesticides.

The worst of it all is that, if things continue as they are, the crisis will become even more serious. The production and consumption patterns of developed countries are accelerating the planet's climate change, which threatens humanity's very existence. These patterns must be changed. The irrational attempt to perpetuate these disastrous forms of consumerism is behind the sinister strategy of transforming grains and cereals into fuels.

At the Havana Summit, Non-Aligned Countries called on peoples to work towards a peaceful and prosperous world and a just and equitable international order. This is the only path to follow if we're to put an end to the food crisis.

The right to food is an inalienable human right. At Cuba's instance, this has been ratified by successive resolutions approved by the former Commission on

Human Rights since 1997 and, later, by the Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly. As the representative of the Non-Aligned Movement, with the support of more than two thirds of UN member states, our country also promoted the calling of a seventh special session of the Human Rights Council, which has just called for concrete actions to address the world food crisis.

Hunger and malnourishment cannot be eradicated through palliatives, nor with symbolic donations which —let us be honest—will not satisfy peoples' needs and will not be sustainable.

At the very least, agricultural production in South countries must first be rehabilitated and developed. Developed countries have more than enough resources for this. What's required is the political will of their governments.

If NATO's military budget were reduced by a mere 10% a year, nearly 100 billion dollars would be available for spending elsewhere.

If the foreign debt of developing countries, a debt they have paid several times over, were cancelled, South countries would have at their disposal the 345 billion dollars they annually devote to service payments.

If developed countries honoured their commitment to devote 0.7 % of the Gross Domestic Product to Official Development Aid, South countries would be able to rely at least on an additional 130 billion dollars a year.

If only one fourth of the money squandered each year on commercial advertisement were devoted to food production, nearly 250 billion dollars could be destined to fight hunger and malnutrition.

If the money destined to agricultural subsidies in the North were destined to agricultural development in the South, our countries would have around a billion dollars a day at their disposal, to invest in food production.

Mr. Chairman,

This is the message brought by Cuba, a country ferociously blockaded but standing proud on its principles and the unity of its people: yes, this food crisis can be successfully confronted, but we should target the root of the problem, address its real causes and repudiate demagoguery, hypocrisy and false promises.

Allow me to conclude recalling the words of Fidel Castro, when he addressed the UN General Assembly in New York in October 1979:

"The noise of weapons, of the menacing language, of the haughtiness on the international scene must cease. Enough of the illusion that the problems of the world can be solved by nuclear weapons. Bombs may kill the hungry, the sick and the ignorant, but bombs cannot kill hunger, disease and ignorance."

Thank you very much.