



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
18 September 2023

Original: English

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## Seventy-eighth session

Agenda items 18 and 125

## Sustainable development

## Global health and foreign policy

### **Letter dated 17 September 2023 from the representatives of Belarus, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Eritrea, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Nicaragua, the Russian Federation, the Syrian Arab Republic the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Zimbabwe to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly**

We have the honour to address you, in our capacity as representatives of the delegations of Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Eritrea, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Nicaragua, the Russian Federation, the Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela and Zimbabwe, in relation to the unfortunate situation created around the draft political declarations of the Sustainable Development Goals Summit, the high-level meeting on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, the high-level meeting on universal health coverage and the high-level meeting on the fight against tuberculosis.

In this regard, it is regrettable that it has not been possible to find a political solution to the current stalemate, created not only due to the lack of will of some developed countries to engage in true and meaningful negotiations to have balanced and acceptable outcomes for all, but also due to the lack of transparency and poor handling by your predecessor's team of all these processes.

As you are aware, the issue of the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures is an existential one for our peoples. A third of the world's population is affected by these illegal measures. There is ample evidence, including from United Nations sources, of the heavy toll caused by unilateral coercive measures on targeted countries' capacities to achieve sustainable development and to make further progress in protecting the right to health of their respective populations. Regardless of these facts, we have engaged in the negotiations of these draft outcomes in good faith, with a spirit of compromise and a constructive approach, in order to reach consensus.

Since the beginning of these processes, we have insisted on the need to include our concerns in these important political documents, on the basis of consensual language, as reflected in paragraph 30 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This request has been echoed by a large number of delegations,



including from the Group of 77 and China and from the Group of Friends in Defence of the Charter of the United Nations, among others.

The legitimate concerns of a large number of developing countries have been ignored. Hence, it is our duty to express our strong concerns on the unacceptable way in which this situation unfolded, running in clear contradiction with the spirit of multilateralism and the overall goal of “leaving no one behind”.

First, there has been no real willingness from a small group of developed countries to engage in meaningful negotiations to find compromises, forcing unfair practices which pretend to impose a kind of “veto” on certain issues, and pretending to even prevent their discussion within the framework of intergovernmental negotiations.

Second, in some cases, negotiations were not conducted in a truly inclusive, fair and balanced way. Our delegations had to witness how, in some cases, even single delegations were accommodated a great deal in their concerns, while others’ priorities, including ours, were bluntly neglected. For example, the draft outcome of the high-level political forum on sustainable development under the auspices of the General Assembly, the Sustainable Development Goals Summit, was reopened with the purpose of exclusively accommodating the priorities of a few delegations from developed countries, while, in this very same process, and in the three health-related negotiations, nothing was done to reflect and accommodate the legitimate concerns of delegations from developing countries that, in addition, had broken silence repeatedly, including the Group of 77 and China.

Third, the attempt to ignore formal communications of delegations from developing countries, including from the Group of 77 and China on behalf of its 134 member States, indicating strong reservations and objections.

Fourth, the attempt to force consensus by your predecessor’s team, and now by your Office, when it is evident that no consensus has been reached on any of these processes, as well as the lack of transparency, inclusiveness and efficient use of the limited time available then to find compromises.

Our delegations are convinced that this is no way to handle multilateral and intergovernmental negotiations on issues of great relevance for the international community, particularly for developing countries. Thus, we would like to put on record that we do not condone, nor accept, this practice, and that it does not set any precedent for the work of the United Nations and its General Assembly. This is particularly relevant, as we look forward to future negotiation processes on fundamental matters, in which we will continue engaging with great determination, flexibility and constructiveness.

Our delegations would also like to recall the nature and legal standing of the meetings in which the Sustainable Development Goals Summit, the high-level meeting on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, the high-level meeting on universal health coverage and the high-level meeting on the fight against tuberculosis will take place.

In relation to the high-level political forum on sustainable development under the auspices of the General Assembly, the Sustainable Development Goals Summit, and in accordance with General Assembly resolution [67/290](#), in its operative paragraph 9, “all meetings convened under the auspices of the General Assembly shall operate under the rules of procedure of the main committees of the Assembly, as applicable, unless otherwise provided in the present resolution”. Also, operative paragraph 6 of that very same resolution clearly states that the forum “shall result in a concise negotiated political declaration to be submitted for the consideration of the Assembly”.

Hence, we expect a process to take place at a later stage, where the General Assembly will formally consider the adoption of the draft political declaration, under chapter XII of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

Similarly, General Assembly resolutions [75/315](#), [77/274](#) and [77/275](#) are clear in indicating that the political declarations of the three health-related high-level meetings should “be submitted by the President of the General Assembly for adoption by the Assembly”.

In that sense, our delegations oppose any attempt to pretend to formally adopt any of the draft outcome documents in question, during the meetings scheduled for 18, 20, 21 and 22 September 2023, respectively. In addition, we reserve the right to take appropriate action upon the formal consideration of these four draft outcome documents in the coming weeks, after the conclusion of the high-level segment of the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly, when they must all be considered by the General Assembly in accordance with its rules of procedures.

In that spirit and in the interest of transparency, we hereby respectfully request your good offices for circulating as soon as possible the present letter as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 18 and 125.

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Ambassador

Permanent Representative of the Republic of Belarus  
to the United Nations

*(Signed)* Diego **Pary Rodríguez**  
Ambassador

Permanent Representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia  
to the United Nations

*(Signed)* Gerardo **Peñalver**  
Ambassador

Permanent Representative of the Republic of Cuba to the United Nations

*(Signed)* Song **Kim**  
Ambassador

Permanent Representative of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea  
to the United Nations

*(Signed)* Sophia **Tesfamariam**  
Ambassador

Permanent Representative of the State of Eritrea to the United Nations

*(Signed)* Amir Saeid Jalil **Iravani**  
Ambassador

Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran  
to the United Nations

*(Signed)* Jaime **Hermida Castillo**  
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Permanent Representative of the Republic of Nicaragua  
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*(Signed)* Vasily A. **Nebenzia**  
Ambassador

Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation  
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(*Signed*) Bassam **Sabbagh**

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(*Signed*) Joaquín A. **Pérez Ayestarán**

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(*Signed*) Albert Ranganai **Chimbindi**

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