# Remarks by the outgoing NAM Chairman Cuban President Gen. Raul Castro Ruz at the NAM Summit in Egypt

Thursday, 16 July 2009
Last Updated Thursday, 16 July 2009

REMARKS BY ARMY GENERAL RAUL CASTRO RUZ, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA, AT THE 15TH NAM SUMMIT, SHARM EL SHEIKH, EGYPT, JULY 15, 2009 Your Excellency Mr. Mohamed Hosni Mubarak, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt: Distinguished Heads of State or Government: Ladies and Gentlemen: On behalf of my delegation I wish to express our appreciation to the Egyptian government and people for their warm welcome. We are convinced that this 15th Summit Conference will strengthen the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. Cuba shall offer its full support to Egypt as its new chair.

It is an honor for our country to pass the chair of the Movement on to one of its founders. From its early days, the Cuban Revolution found friendship and support in this Arab nation; and this year we shall celebrate together six decades of continuous fraternal relations. We never forget the noble gesture of President Gamal Abdel Nasser, one of the founding fathers of non-alignment, who visited the then Prime Minister of the Revolutionary Government, comrade Fidel Castro Ruz, when both converged in New York in 1960 to attend the 15th Session of the UN General Assembly and the Cuban leader was accorded a discriminatory and insulting treatment by the U.S. authorities. The ministerial meeting of the Coordinating Bureau of NAM held in Havana April 27 to 30 this year succeeded in its basic objective of making arrangements for this summit conference. The ministers and heads of delegations assembled there reached consensus on their positions with regard to the most pressing issues affecting humanity and particularly the developing countries. The Special Declaration on the World Economic and Financial Crisis adopted in that meeting is proof of the transcendence of the debates and of our determination to work in concert towards the solution of the international problems. NAM has asserted its firm belief that every country, and not only a few, should participate in the quest for effective and just solutions to the current crisis. As we said in Havana, the Non-aligned countries are the ones most affected by the global economic crisis. Hundreds of millions of people in the world, especially in our countries, are the victims of illiteracy, unemployment, hunger, poverty and curable diseases, which condemn the human beings living in the South of the planet to live shorter and harder lives than those in the industrialized North. Paradoxically, as it is usually the case, this crisis originated in the rich countries due to the structural unbalance and irrationality of an international economic system based on the blind laws of the market, on selfishness and consumerism and on the squandering of a few at the expense of the suffering of our peoples. We call for the urgent construction of a new international financial architecture where every country has a real participation, particularly the developing nations. The current crisis cannot be solved with cosmetic measures that actually try to preserve a deeply flawed, unfair, unequal and ineffective economic system. The solution of the global economic crisis demands a re-founding of the international monetary system. The new currency pattern to be established should not depend on the economic stability, legislation or political decisions of only one state, its power and influence notwithstanding. Many countries, Cuba among them, put forward this position during the recent UN High Level Conference on the impact of the economic and financial crisis on development. The new system should acknowledge the particular situation of the developing nations and grant them a special and differential treatment. It should also promote a fair and equitable international economic order based on sustainable development whose institutions subordinate to the United Nations system. Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen: It is an honor to introduce Cuba’s Report on the activities of NAM in the past three years. The extensive and detailed paper will be circulated to the delegations. The most important conclusion we have drawn from this period chairing the Movement is that unity and solidarity among the member countries are indispensable requirements to enhance the impact of our actions. The strength of NAM lies in its capacity to reach consensus as a result of open discussions. Every member has had the opportunity to be involved in the design and defense of our agreements and lines of action. Success lies in the intensification of the unity stemming from the diversity characterizing our Movement. In 1961, we were 25 countries in the NAM, and Cuba was the only Latin American. Today, we have 118 member states which make up the majority of the international community. But we have not only grown in number, as history has also showed the justice of our aspirations and goals. Our demands can no longer be ignored, nor can any decision be adopted on the main problems affecting mankind without the active participation of NAM. The Non-aligned countries are facing numerous and grave challenges. Never before was inequality as prevalent in the world, nor were inequities as deep; but as challenges have grown so have our Movement’s resilience and strength. We have confronted threats and aggressions and condemned unfair treatment in international trade and finances, and we have urged our full involvement in the main world governmental forums. A decisive part of Cuba’s term at the head of NAM was concurrent with one of the most aggressive and hegemonic governments ever in the United States, and a violator of international law. The actions of NAM, even under the most complex circumstances, have been guided by the founding principles of Bandung, and more recently by the “Declaration on purposes and principles” and “The role of NAM in the current international juncture” adopted at the 14th Summit in Havana. Both documents spell out a program to jointly face the enormous challenges to the struggle for a better world where our peoples’ right to peace, self-determination and development are respected. It is important to carry on with the systematic assessment of NAM’s mechanisms and methodology to be able to use all of their potential. The leadership of the Chairman is crucial. His authority can be consolidated by building consensus and steadily defending the agreements adopted and their subsequent implementation. The agreements adopted will remain a legacy to the Plan of Action of the Non-Aligned Movement. The promotion of multilateralism and democratization in international relations, and full respect for the UN Charter and International Law are inherent in the very existence and the effective work of NAM. We have rejected antidemocratic methods and the lack of transparency as well as the obstacles to full participation and discrimination in multilateral

negotiations and discussions. NAM should be present in every relevant multilateral scene to advocate the interests of the developing nations. Its premise will never be competition but rather complementation with other coordination mechanisms of the South countries. In this token, major progress has been attained in the work of the Joint Coordinating Committee of NAM and the G-77, an increasingly strong instrument whose impact is growing; therefore, it should continue to receive our full support. The preservation of international peace and security should remain a basic priority of the Movement. Meanwhile, the total removal of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction are still urgent but pending goals. We are still far from reaching our objectives in that area; therefore, we should continue working until their realization. It is irrational that while annual military expenses are rapidly increasing and already touch the scaring figure of 1.46 billion dollars --almost 60% concentrated in only one country-- the number of starving people in the world is reaching one billion. The resources allocated today to the war industry should be used in education, healthcare and culture as well as in the economic and social wellbeing of our peoples, but this calls for political will and true commitment. It requires giving up hegemonic projects, the threat and use of force, selfishness and the reckless squandering of a few. It calls for the removal of an international order based on the implementation of imperial plans. Another priority of NAM has been to ensure a broader participation of the South in the proceedings and decision-making process of the UN Security Council. The NAM Caucus in that body has made progress; however, much remains to be done. We have failed to take advantage of all of the current possibilities and our actions still fall short of decisively weighing on the agreements adopted there. Of course, structural problems remain that can only be surmounted through a major democratization of the Security Council as part of the reforms required by the UN. The stable and dynamic work of the Coordinating Bureau and the consolidation of its eight Working Groups have led to the reinforcement of the Non-aligned countries’ positions in key processes within the framework of the UN. The decisions of the Coordinating Bureau in New York tend to be increasingly far-reaching and transcendental. Support for the just Palestinian cause and those of other occupied Arab peoples has been and will continue to be at the center of NAM’s actions. We have not hesitated in condemning the aggressions and crimes of the occupying power, Israel, and we shall not rest until the fulfillment of the demands of our Palestinian and Arab brothers. There is no other way but dialogue and negotiation to attain a just and lasting peace in the entire Middle East region; and this cannot avoid the foundation of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital. On the other hand, NAM is determined to continue to support one of its members, the fraternal people of the Republic of Honduras, in its struggle against the brutal coup d’état that ousted the constitutional government of that country. It is also NAM’s duty to urge respect for the UN General Assembly’s agreement to return President Jose Manuel Zelaya to his position without humiliating preconditions, and to continue denouncing the repression and murdering of our Honduran brothers and sisters. NAM has become more active in UNESCO, but there is potential to continue strengthening and consolidating its work in this agency where the efforts of the NAM member countries are crucial to turn into a reality such indispensable objectives as education for all and respect for cultural diversity; the preservation of humanity’s cultural heritage and the end of brain drain from our South nations; and, the shrinking of the enormous gap between the rich and poor countries in the areas of information and communication. The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries is an indispensable actor in the Human Rights Council, the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We should be prepared for the institutional review of the Human Rights Council. Our objective should be to preserve cooperation, respect and dialogue in order to promote and protect human rights for all. We cannot allow the Council to return to the practices that led to the discredit of the late Human Rights Commission. Of special significance is the progress achieved in the coordination of our actions in the World Health Organization and the International Labor Organization as demanded by the relevance of the issues discussed there to the developing countries. The annual meetings held by our Health and Labor ministers and the decisions adopted therein have given a necessary impetus to the defense of the interests of the South nations in these international organizations. For example, we have pressing goals to reach at the WHO such as curbing the death toll of 10 million children every year from preventable diseases; reversing the 40-year difference between life expectancy in the richest and poorest countries; expanding the training of healthcare personnel in the developing nations; and, demanding greater attention to diseases affecting our peoples. Cuba is a small developing country with no resources to spare. Additionally, it has endured the longest, most encompassing and cruel system of unilateral sanctions imposed by a powerful State. Actually, despite the almost unanimous outcry of the international community, the rejection of its own people and the promises of change of the new U.S. administration, the truth is that the same illegal blockade decreed against Cuba almost five decades ago is still being enforced today with maximum rigor. Allow me once again to express our appreciation for the solidarity of the countries that steadily demand the immediate removal of that morally unsustainable and unjust policy which intensifies the impact of the world economic and financial crisis on my homeland. Yet, under such challenging conditions, our people has modestly proven what can be done in terms of solidarity and international cooperation, particularly in the health area, when there is a political will. At the moment, almost 51 thousand Cuban workers are assisting in 98 countries to save lives, prevent diseases or contribute to development while over 32 thousand youths from 118 countries, mostly in the Third World, are studying free of charge in our educational centers, 78% of them in medical schools. These numbers account for only a small part of what could be done if selfishness yielded to cooperation and solidarity; if we united in the struggle against a system of exploitation and plundering that tends to reproduce underdevelopment and widen the gap between a limited group of rich nations, where barely 20% of the world population lives, and an extensive periphery made up by our countries, where 80% of mankind lives. We are convinced that a better world is possible and that the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries has an essential role to play in its conquest. But, even if what we have done together is encouraging, it is still more important that we are aware of huge looming challenges. Six years ago, in his remarks to the 13th Summit at Kuala Lumpur to express his appreciation on the decision to appoint Cuba to chair NAM as of 2006, Commander in Chief Fidel Castro stated that from that position Cuba was willing “to work to consolidate the actions of the Movement, both at

the United Nations and in other forums, in the struggle for peace, justice, equal opportunities and respect for the principles of International Law which has always been at the root of the Movement and in the struggle for development and against an international economic and financial order that marginalizes our countries making them poorer and more dependent.” With sincere and modest pride, after having fulfilled our duty we pass the chairmanship of NAM on to Egypt. In spite our dissatisfaction with everything we could have done better, it can be said that we have an invigorated Movement that will carry on playing the major role expected of it in the current world. On behalf of the Cuban government and people allow me to reiterate our appreciation to all of you for the support provided through these three years. You can be certain that our commitment to the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries will remain unchanged. I reaffirm our most sincere friendship and recognition to every one of you with whom we have shared in the trenches fighting colonialism, apartheid, interventionism, arms build-up, economic exploitation, diseases and illiteracy, and who have always given our people solidarity in the struggle to safeguard their sovereignty and independence, and to overcome the illegal obstacles unilaterally imposed to jeopardize their right to development. Now, all that is left for me to do, --and I feel honored to do it—is to submit to this plenary session the election by acclamation of the new Chairman of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, his Excellency Mr. Mohamed Hosni Mubarak, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt. I assume that you all agree. I offer my congratulations to the new Chairman and our best wishes for success. Thank you, very much.