Open letter from the Cuban Association of the United Nations

COVID-19 and the 2030 Agenda

The coronavirus pandemic has unleashed an unprecedented global crisis. The impacts caused by COVID-19 are evident in all sectors of life, exposing more crudely the levels of inequality generated by the prevailing capitalist system.

All have been affected in one way or another by this terrible event, but the most vulnerable populations have had the greatest consequences.

With fragmented health systems, weak social protection structures and deep inequalities, Latin America and the Caribbean has been the most impacted region to date. Shortly before the arrival of the coronavirus, the situation was already complex. The growing popular discontent marked a notable deterioration of its main social indicators, while highlighting the systemic crisis in which neoliberalism finds itself as a model of unequal and unjust development.

Recurrent debt and currency crises, low economic growth, increased external debt, high levels of informality and poverty, vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters, loss of biodiversity, extremely high rates of homicides and gender violence, including femicide and corruption, are some of the most significant challenges to be faced by the region in the face of the post-pandemic stage.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, rebuilding better implies rebuilding with equality. Consequently, the new stage should not lose sight of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); which constitutes the global battle to achieve a better world for all. However, five years after it was signed and its implementation is booming, the countries of the world have been surprised by COVID-19. This has forced many Governments to redirect their efforts to contain and recover from the pandemic, paying less attention to its fulfillment. This has generated many concerns, particularly in those who think that what is necessary cannot be erased by what is imminent.

Now, the world is moving towards a "new normality" and in this long process, our organization, despite the effects generated by the health crisis and the intensification of the United States' blockade against Cuba, reaffirms its total commitment to complying with the 2030 Agenda and sustainable development with a renewed focus.

The 2030 Agenda in the post-COVID-19 world demands more solidarity, more cooperation, and international integration, as well as the revitalization of multilateralism. Now, more than ever, the urgent need to consolidate multilateral cooperation and develop strategies that help us to counter the negative effects of the pandemic in a balanced manner and without neglecting the commitments assumed, is becoming clear. After all, everything collected there will leave us in better conditions to face this and other similar crises in the future.

That is why we celebrate, despite the difficult situation in today's world, the virtual realization of the High Level Political Forum. We cannot deny the importance that it has as the main multilateral mechanism in the monitoring and implementation of the 2030 Agenda, nor should we forget the role that civil society plays as a fundamental and necessary actor to achieve sustainable development.

Humanity is going through one of its most difficult moments since World War II. Hope, still remains. Therefore, we cannot afford to go backwards to date with respect to the 2030 Agenda. The SDGs must continue to be the frame of reference for the international community, national governments and civil society in general to achieve sustainable development and validate the commitment to achieve a better world, without leaving anyone behind.

Havana, July 20, 2020