INFORMATION NOTE ON SIDE EVENT TO BE HELD ON THE SIDELINES OF THE WORKS OF THE THIRD COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Theme: “The Negative Impact of Unilateral Coercive Measures on the Full Enjoyment and Realization of the Rights to Development and Health”

Date: Monday, 30 October 2023

Time: 15:00-18:00 Hrs.

Venue: ECOSOC Chamber (UNHQ)

Language: English

Format: In person (with live coverage via UN Web TV)

Level: PR/DPR/CdA

Moderator: H.E. Mr. Joaquín A. Pérez Ayestarán, Ambassador, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the United Nations, Chargé d’affaires, a.i.

Panelists:

1. Professor Alena Douhan, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Negative Impact of Unilateral Coercive Measures on the Enjoyment of Human Rights

2. H.E. Mr. William Castillo, Vice-Minister for Anti-Blockade Policies, Ministry of the People’s Power for Economy, Finance and Foreign Trade of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

3. Dr. Mohammad Marandi, Professor at the University of Tehran

4. Mr. Vijay Prashad, Executive Director, Tricontinental Institute for Social Research

5. Mr. Elias Amare, Journalist and Geopolitical Analyst

Statements: 3 Minutes (without pre-established list of speakers).

#LiftSanctions #SolidarityInAction #R2DisLife #Health4All #StrongerTogether #SanctionsKill
CONCEPT NOTE

Background:

Three years after the unexpected outbreak of the deadliest pandemic humanity has faced in over a century, COVID-19, its profound and devastating consequences persist. This includes its impacts on human, social, and economic aspects of peoples and nations daily life, which continue to wreak havoc worldwide, but particularly in the Global South.

Inequalities within societies and among nations have only intensified, with those historically marginalized bearing the brunt of these effects. This situation has jeopardized national efforts for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the attainment of its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), causing, among others, significant imbalances in international trade and supply chains, leading to increased poverty and suffering, while even reverting many of the hard-won achievements. Such a reality, which today puts us far off-track for realizing on time the commitments made back in 2015 when adopting the 2030 Agenda, stands in direct violation of the Charter of the United Nations, all international human rights agreements, and the norms of international law in general.

In this complex landscape of exclusion, the pandemic's political exploitation and the ever-increasing and unprecedented resort to the promulgation and application of unilateral coercive measures (UCMs) as tools of pressure by certain governments, particularly from the North, with financial and commercial monopolies, have drastically impacted, among others, access to Universal Health Coverage. This includes, for instance, access to vaccines against the novel coronavirus, as well as to medicines, treatments, medical equipment and supplies, professional services, as well as other basic needs such as food, technologies, education, financial and communication services, marketing supply chains, energy sources and other goods and commodities. These areas are crucial for achieving the SDGs by 2030 and for realizing development in its three dimensions. Additionally, an important number of individuals, either directly and indirectly, have sacrificed their lives or endured immense pain and suffering as a result of such criminal and inhumane policies.

A prominent example of the growing use of UCMs – of which today the world is seeing a new generation that is now much more cruel and destructive than ever before – is highlighted in the recent report of Professor Alena Douhan (A/78/196), Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights. The report indicates that the use of so-called sanctions" by a country that
frequently employs this measure as a pressure tactic “increased by 933% between 2000 and 2021, rising from 912 in 2000 to 9,421 active designations (...) within 37 sanctions programs.” This escalation, which saw no halt even during the worst part of the COVID-19 pandemic, including its secondary effects and extraterritorial implications, amplifies its detrimental effects on societies as a whole.

Unilateral coercive measures, which go against the provisions of several resolutions and declarations adopted by United Nations entities and human rights bodies, including the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council, create uncertainties and destabilize institutions at national, regional, and local levels. They weaken and disintegrate social structures and community participation. Economically, they hinder national production and disrupt supply chains, leading to increased social exclusion. Socially, these measures limit the State's capacity to implement social policies benefiting various sectors, such as children, youth, women, the elderly and the disabled, among others. Collectively, these actions, over time, have been deemed by legal experts and academics as crimes against humanity. Such measures directly affect one-third of humanity, encompassing more than two billion people, in more than 31 nations across the globe.

Undoubtedly, developing countries subjected to UCMs have a critical responsibility to raise global awareness of the detrimental impact of these measures and take the necessary concrete actions to ensure the safety and wellbeing of their population. The international community as a whole has also a key role to play in the global campaign in favor of the complete, immediate and unconditional lifting of UCMs, especially bearing in mind that such illegal measures go against the pledge of leaving no one behind, as they constitute a direct and deliberate attack on the right to development and prevent the realization of, among others, the SDGs, including the one referred to good health and wellbeing, particularly in the current post-pandemic era.

The United Nations is the forum par excellence to denounce the increasingly negative and fulminating impact that these unilateral actions, outside the framework of the Security Council – the only international body legally empowered to authorize the implementation of sanctions – have on Human Rights, Sustainable Development and International Peace and Security, in addition to constituting a threat, among others, to political stability, good neighborliness and the very founding spirit of our Organization.

This is a reality that can no longer be ignored, minimized or swept under the carpet, including within the context of intergovernmental processes for negotiating outcome documents on critical subjects for ensuring the wellbeing of peoples, including the realization, among others, of their inalienable right to development and health.
Objectives:

- To obtain an updated assessment and an insight from experts, with a cross-regional perspective, on the extent and impact of UCMs on the implementation of the social and sustainable development agendas of States.

- To explore multilateral approaches and identify potential methods or best practices that could serve for effectively advocating and ultimately achieving the complete and unconditional lifting of UCMs, while also contributing to raising global awareness regarding their negative impact, particularly on vulnerable populations.

- To provide a platform for engaging in an open dialogue and exchanging views among Member States, United Nations Agencies officials, academics, civil society representatives, and human rights experts, on the negative impact of UCMs, among others, on the attainment of the SDGs, as well as on the achievement of Universal Health Coverage, and in national efforts towards pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response.

- To provide an opportunity for elaborating and identifying means and ways for ensuring the implementation of relevant resolutions and declarations adopted by United Nations entities and human rights bodies, including the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council, on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures, as a concrete demonstration of the commitment to leaving no one behind and ensuring the protection and realization of the human rights of all peoples, including those from targeted countries, particularly in face of the current global crisis.