**LATIN AMERICA 2025, 8 February, Hamilton House, London
Speech by Ismara Mercedes Vargas Cuban Ambassador in the seminar:
‘Trump: The sequel’. Cuba – Ten years on from normalisation: Cuba-US relations under a new US presidency**

Dear friends, I am honored to stand before you today as the Ambassador of Cuba and as a representative of a people who, for more than six decades, have resisted empire, defended our sovereignty, and redefined resilience. We gather at a critical moment-ten years after the historic re-establishment of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States under Presidents Raúl Castro and Barack Obama, a moment that offered a glimpse of a future based on dialogue, mutual respect, and the right to self-determination. Today, however, we face a grim resurgence of policies designed to oppress our people-a new era marked by a return to the dark days of maximum pressure reminiscent of the Trump administration. Under the renewed leadership of a U.S. administration that now includes figures like Marco Rubio as Secretary of State, we are witnessing an aggressive campaign that echoes the imperialist overtones of the Monroe Doctrine, a doctrine that for centuries has justified intervention in our hemisphere under the guise of protecting the region.

In the first Trump administration, more than 240 punitive unilateral coercive measures were enacted to cripple our economy and undermine our socialist project. They took the illegal blockade to medieval extremes - restricting remittances, strangling tourism, and even reactivating draconian laws like Title III of the Helms-Burton Act to punish any nation that dares to engage with Cuba. In the midst of a global pandemic, these policies denied us essential medical supplies, from syringes and oxygen to life-saving medicines, all while cloaked in rhetoric that falsely labeled Cuba a "state sponsor of terrorism. Such actions were not mere policy adjustments, but deliberate acts of economic warfare designed to force our nation into submission.

And in four years, the Biden administration did nothing to reverse these criminal actions. A week before leaving the White House for the new occupant, Biden removed Cuba from the so-called terrorist list and reversed some of the Trump-era measures. Too little, too late. Completely useless and ridiculously timed. Just one week later, Trump began his second term and reinstated all measures against Cuba.

Now, as we face a return to these repressive strategies, we must be clear that this is not a quest for democracy or human rights - it is an ideological crusade aimed at regime change through economic strangulation and political destabilization. With the revival of these policies under an administration steeped in Cold War mentalities and echoing the interventionist legacy of the Monroe Doctrine, Cuba is being targeted not only because of our commitment to socialism, but also because of our independent path of development and international solidarity. The renewed aggression, orchestrated by figures like Marco Rubio in his role as Secretary of State and other hardliners, threatens to deepen the suffering of ordinary Cubans by further trying to isolate us from critical international partnerships in health, energy and trade.

But Cuba has faced such challenges before. We have survived 63 years of blockade, invasion and relentless attempts at biological warfare. We have built schools instead of bombs, sent doctors instead of troops, developed our own Covid-19 vaccines under the harshest sanctions, and trained more than 30,000 doctors from more than 120 countries, including young people from the U.S., free of charge. Our story is one of relentless determination and the ability to overcome adversity. Rather than breaking our spirit, any new policy against our people will only unite us more.

In these perilous times, the role of international solidarity has never been more important. We call on our friends in the UK and around the world to spread the truth about the reality of Cuba and to stand firmly with our nation against policies that only serve to advance a politics of hate and domination. Trade with Cuba, visit Cuba, and join campaigns and mobilizations that expose the criminal nature of the blockade and challenge the lies of those who would see our nation weakened. Our struggle is not just ours - it is part of a broader struggle against imperialism and for a just, multipolar world where sovereignty is respected and human dignity is prioritized.

You can leave here today with the firm conviction that Cuba will continue to resist. Our revolution, our sovereignty and our right to self-determination are not for sale or negotiation. The international solidarity that has sustained us for decades remains one of our greatest strengths, and together we will meet the challenges that lie ahead. ¡Hasta la victoria siempre!