

**STATEMENT TO BE DELIVERED AT MINISTERIAL MEETING OF THE
NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT (NAM)**

UN, NY
26 September 2018

Mr. Chair,

H.E. Mr. Samuel Moncada, Ambassador of the brotherly Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela,
Distinguished delegates and observers,

On behalf of the Hostosian National Independence Movement of Puerto Rico (MINH in Spanish), we wish to thank the opportunity of allowing us to address this important multilateral forum.

I come from an island located in what we know as the Caribbean Sea. It is the smallest of the Greater Antilles, but it is also the gateway to the archipelago composed by the Lesser Antilles. We are the midway point between two major continents: North America and South America. Despite being a Latin American and Caribbean people, the result of an imperial intervention, we are a nation subject to colonial domination by the United States. We represent the voices of a people in struggle that, in spite of being under colonial domination for 120 years, claims for their right to self-determination and independence.

As a consequence of the US colonial domination over Puerto Rico, we have become the third country with the greatest inequality worldwide. By using the same parameters of the United States for their inhabitants and residents, the poverty level in Puerto Rico is 60%, the workforce participation is only 42%; in addition to the precarity of the health system, education, and an accelerating aging process of the population. Today, hundreds of thousands of Puerto Ricans, particularly the young people, have had to flee due to the lack of options and work opportunities in their homeland. If the United States portrayed Puerto Rico as the window to the Caribbean in the past, that window is completely shattered.

The humanitarian crisis created by the impact of Hurricanes Irma and María has demonstrated a lack of sensitivity, discriminatory treatment, and predatory policies by the United States against those who they consider their citizens. If in any way the lack of sensitivity has been revealed, it was in the response of the US President regarding the almost 3,000 deaths as a consequence of Hurricane María. The United States has never fulfilled its obligations as administering power under the international law. At the time of the greatest crisis, the Congress has responded by intensifying its colonial control and economic exploitation by establishing a Fiscal Control Board. In doing so, they intend to guarantee the payment of an odious debt

contracted by the colonial government in benefit of the bondholders and vulture funds, condemning the country to an austerity regime and undermining their labor law, pensions, social welfare and the right to sustainable development. If at any time the lack of political power has been brought to the light, it has been at this time of profound humanitarian and economic crisis.

In the last years, the three political branches of the US Government (executive, legislative, and judicial) have recognized the territorial subordination of Puerto Rico to the so-called plenary powers of the Congress. The sovereignty to which our country is entitled has been violated by the same Congress. As it was established in Article IX of the 1898 Paris Treaty, the political condition of the territory and its inhabitants would be determined by the US Congress.

The Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN General Assembly resolution 1514 XV (1960), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, the 37 resolutions adopted by the Special Committee on Decolonization, and the declarations adopted by Heads of State and Foreign Minister of this Non-Aligned Movement, have imposed the obligation to take actions aimed at promoting and realizing the exercise of the right to self-determination and independence of the Puerto Rican people. To this day, the United States has disregarded, hindered, and blocked the exercise of those inalienable rights.

The primary responsibility to achieve our independence corresponds to the people of Puerto Rico; however, the international community, within the framework of the above-mentioned resolutions and covenants, has the responsibility to ensure the free exercise of those rights. In the context of this Ministerial Meeting dedicated to peace, we garner your support to our just claims, reaffirming your commitment to the right to self-determination and independence of the people of Puerto Rico.