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Unilateral economic measures as a means of political and economic coercion against developing countries*

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 78/135, entitled "Unilateral economic measures as a means of political and economic coercion against developing countries". It contains the outcome of the monitoring by the Secretary-General of the imposition of such measures and a brief analysis of their impact on the affected countries, including the impact on trade and sustainable development. The report reflects input from Member States and entities across the United Nations system.

Responses from Member States indicate diverging views on unilateral economic measures. While most respondents expressed their disagreement with the imposition of unilateral economic measures, regarding them as an instrument of political and economic coercion against developing countries, some viewed such measures as admissible in specific circumstances. Member States expressed concern about the adverse impacts of unilateral measures on sustainable development. United Nations entities reported detrimental impacts on the development outcomes and human rights situations of affected countries. The number of unilateral economic measures has been increasing in recent years.

* The report was submitted late owing to circumstances beyond the control of the submitting office.

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 78/135, entitled "Unilateral economic measures as a means of political and economic coercion against developing countries",[1] urged the international community to adopt urgent and effective measures to eliminate the use of unilateral economic, financial or trade measures that are not authorized by relevant organs of the United Nations, that are inconsistent with the principles of international law or the Charter of the United Nations or that contravene the basic principles of the multilateral trading system and that affect, in particular, but not exclusively, developing countries.

2. In the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to monitor the imposition of such measures, study their impact on the affected countries, including the impact on trade and development and report on the implementation of the resolution to the Assembly at its eightieth session, with a focus on sustainable development.

3. Pursuant to that request, in a note verbale dated 20 March 2025, the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs invited Member States, international organizations, including United Nations entities, regional commissions and United Nations country teams, through the offices of resident coordinators, to provide input to the report.

4. Responses from Member States are reproduced in part[2] in the annex to the present report, with full versions available at http://policy.desa.un.org/uem2025.

II. Summary of Member State responses

5. There are diverging views among Members States on the issue of unilateral measures. While some deemed them admissible in some circumstances, most respondents expressed their disagreement with the imposition of unilateral measures and consider them inconsistent with the principles of the Charter. Those respondents considered that such measures contravened international law, as well as the freedom of international trade, navigation and finance.

6. Member States reported adverse impacts owing to the far-reaching effects of unilateral measures on the rule-based international trading and financial systems, including the freedom of transit. They indicated that unilateral measures not only curtailed vital economic sectors and financial operations, but also hindered the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and aggravated humanitarian conditions.

7. The impact occurs through various transmission channels. Direct restrictions on access to international markets, financial systems and essential goods, such as medicines and fuel, result in weakened public services, in particular in health, education and infrastructure; reduced export revenue; and diminished foreign investment. In addition, constraints on technology transfer and access to fertilizers or energy inputs have an adverse impact on agricultural productivity, food security and industrial development. The compounded effects are most acutely felt by vulnerable populations owing to the rising cost of living and deteriorating access to basic services. In some cases, these measures have led to increased poverty and inequality.

[1] In the present report, "unilateral economic measures as a means of political and economic coercion" is abbreviated as "unilateral measures".

[2] The responses are lightly edited to remain within the reduced word count of report owing to the current budget situation.

8. Member States also reported that economic activities and fiscal space were affected by secondary effects, such as overcompliance and disruptions in supply chains. Some reported that unilateral measures on their trading partners or neighbouring countries imposed indirect economic costs owing to declining bilateral trade, foreign investment, remittances and tourism flows.

III. Monitoring the imposition and impact of unilateral measures

9. As of the end of May 2025, unilateral measures were in effect against 76 developing countries, an increase from 71 in 2023.[3] The number of unilateral measures continued to increase in recent years. Most of them entail restrictions on selected individuals and companies in identified States. In some cases, they also include sanctions on individuals and companies in third States who had commercial transactions with the identified States. However, they can affect entire economic sectors, hindering sustainable development. For example, the United Nations Children's Fund found mounting evidence on the impact on the realization of children's rights.[4]

10. Regional commissions underscored that unilateral measures had collateral impacts and extend beyond targeted States by disrupting regional and global supply chains, including energy, health, agricultural and food items. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights noted that broad sectoral sanctions had, in several countries, disproportionately affected the most vulnerable and hindered the work of some human rights and humanitarian organizations, prompting calls for their reassessment with a view to lifting them.

11. United Nations country teams, in relevant contexts, highlighted that unilateral measures were exacerbating pre-existing socioeconomic challenges and disrupting humanitarian assistance, especially during the onset of an emergency, owing to "overcompliance" and more complex procurement processes. Export and transit restrictions result in a reduction in foreign investment and financial hardship for targeted countries but have also broader macroeconomic ramifications, such as slower gross domestic product growth and higher inflation. Unilateral measures also affect the social and humanitarian conditions owing to the deterioration in public services and a shortage of essential food and health items, with impacts on the most vulnerable. Restrictions on the acquisition of essential supplies and increased transaction costs also delay United Nations operations and the efficiency of projects and programmes to deliver humanitarian and development assistance on the ground.

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[3] Department of Economic and Social Affairs database, based on input from Member States, the Global Sanctions Database (release 4) and desk research.

[4] See United Nations Children's Fund, *Sanctions and their Impact on Children* (2022).

Annex

Replies received from Member States and the European Union, indicating date of receipt

Andorra

[2 April 2025]

Indicated disagreement with the imposition of unilateral economic measures as instruments of political and economic coercion against developing countries.

Belarus

[23 April 2025]

Belarus has been on the receiving end of unilateral coercive measures from a number of countries for many years. Yet, the bulk of these unilateral coercive measures were introduced in 2021–2023. The unilateral coercive measures against Belarus have been imposed by the countries of the EU and some other European countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Switzerland, Ukraine), as well as by the US, UK, Canada, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia, New Zealand.

All these unilateral coercive measures are still effective and they target specific economic sectors, banking and financial operations, as well as individuals. Belarus provided a detailed breakdown of unilateral coercive measures imposed on it by other countries in the previous questionnaire for 2021–2023.

Given space constraints, just a few examples of EU unilateral coercive measures introduced during 2023–2025: the EU introduced bans on the provision of loans and credits, insurance and reinsurance services to legal entities and individuals acting on behalf of the authorities, as well as provision of accounting, auditing, architectural, engineering services, tax and information technology consulting, advertising, market research and opinion polling, product testing and technical control, business and management consulting, public relations, etc.

As of today, a total of 374 individuals and 59 Belarusian legal entities are currently under EU sanctions, with 19 entities partially restricted. The US are targeting more than 400 Belarusian officials and more than 30 legal entities. The UK targets 179 individuals and 38 organizations in Belarus. Japan has introduced unilateral coercive measures against 21 individuals and 35 companies from Belarus. As for Canada, it targets 181 individuals and 62 Belarusian legal entities. The Republic of Korea introduced export controls on 1,402 commodity items from Belarus. Australia imposed restrictive measures against 39 Belarusian individuals and 18 companies. New Zealand’s unilateral coercive measures list against Belarus includes 121 individuals and 26 entities.

As various studies demonstrate, the world as a whole has achieved the Sustainable Development Goals at only about 20 per cent of their benchmarks. We believe that unilateral coercive measures constitute a key cause for this situation. However, the precise impact of unilateral coercive measures on the Goals is hard to estimate. Therefore, Belarus has long been advocating the need for studies to be carried out by United Nations entities (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development), on how unilateral coercive measures specifically affect international trade, commodity prices and the Goals.

Like other countries under unilateral coercive measures, Belarus has also been affected. In particular, the unilateral coercive measures inhibit our trade and financial operations with other countries and restrict free movement of people, which weighs down on sustainable development. Nevertheless, the level of Belarus's Sustainable Development Goals achievement stands currently at 80 per cent. This indicates that we manage to offset to some extent the effect of unilateral coercive measures by increasing cooperation with partners in Eurasia and with developing countries elsewhere.

Belarus is much concerned about the negative effect that the ban on its potash fertilizers produces on food security in developing countries. Specifically, some years ago Belarus's share in the global potash market was 20 per cent, whereas, in the wake of unilateral coercive measures, it dropped to 9 per cent. The contraction was particularly painful for Africa, as Belarus's potash share there declined from 42 per cent to just 3 per cent.

There is increasing evidence that unilateral coercive measures have an adverse effect on its sponsors, too. For example, the increase in tariffs on fertilizer imports into the EU from Belarus and Russia has increased the costs for farmers and consequently raised the relevant prices. Noteworthy in this regard is also the comment by Kaja Kallas, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, made at the 20th EU-Central Asia Ministerial Meeting in March 2025, that "sanctions against Russia are hurting the economies of Central Asian countries".

Unilateral coercive measures imposed against the Republic of Belarus have been politically motivated as they seek to achieve changes in the country's internal and external policies, since Belarus's independent standing in the world and its close relationship with the Russian Federation has not been to the liking of its neighbours from the EU and some other countries in the so-called collective West.

Cambodia

[16 May 2025]

Cambodia has faced significant direct and indirect impacts from unilateral economic measures during 2023–2025. On 9 April 2025, the US imposed a 49 per cent tariff on Cambodian exports – part of a broader 10 per cent baseline tariff on all imports – targeting key sectors like garments, solar panels and bicycles. While the reciprocal tariff was paused for 90 days starting 10 April, the baseline tariff remains binding.

Cambodia's solar panel exports were particularly affected by spillovers from US-China trade tensions. After a temporary 2022 exemption boosted exports, a 2024 US investigation imposed anti-dumping and countervailing duties, citing circumvention of Chinese tariffs. This led to export declines and factory suspensions. Indirectly, sanctions on Russia (2022–present) disrupted global energy and fertilizer markets, raising costs for Cambodian manufacturers and farmers reliant on Vietnamese fertilizer imports.

Additionally, despite Cambodia's 2023 removal from the Financial Action Task Force grey list, US and EU sanctions' extraterritorial effects have tightened financial compliance. Cambodian businesses face higher transaction costs, delayed payments and stricter documentation for United States dollar settlements, hampering trade and remittances.

Cambodia's economy remains vulnerable to these measures, which disrupt trade, investment and development efforts.

Unilateral economic measures negatively affect Cambodia's economy, sustainable development and trade. They disrupt key industries, leading to job losses, reduced incomes and hindered progress in poverty reduction – key pillars of sustainable development. Export revenue declines undermine public services like healthcare and education, while trade restrictions weaken Cambodia's global competitiveness and external stability. The US's 49 per cent tariff on Cambodian exports has particularly impacted labour-intensive sectors, including garments and solar panels, threatening rural livelihoods and green industrial growth.

These measures also deter foreign investment, exacerbating economic vulnerabilities. Cambodia's high dollarization makes it susceptible to export shocks, affecting foreign reserves and exchange rate stability. The poverty rate, already heightened by the pandemic (16.6 per cent in 2024), risks further increase due to trade tensions. Despite a 5 per cent gross domestic product growth in 2023, the measures necessitate economic diversification, with focus on light manufacturing, agroprocessing and renewable energy.

Direct impacts include reduced garment and non-garment exports to the US, while indirect effects spill over into supporting industries and investor confidence, worsening labour markets and household incomes. Over 900,000 workers, mostly women, in the garment sector face heightened risks, undermining gender equality and industrial development goals. These challenges complicate Cambodia's least developed country graduation by 2029 and Sustainable Development Goal achievements, emphasizing the need for strategic recalibration and leveraging regional trade agreements like Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnerships to sustain inclusive growth.

The National Bank of Cambodia supports resilience through environmental, social and governance-aligned policies, but persistent trade tensions threaten to deepen poverty and inequality, requiring urgent policy adjustments to safeguard development gains.

Unilateral coercive measures imposed without Security Council authorization or outside World Trade Organization rules violate international law, undermining global governance institutions. Imposing countries should uphold multilateral norms and avoid measures that harm developing economies, in particular least developed countries like Cambodia. Constructive dialogue – not coercion – should resolve disputes over governance, labour rights or trade imbalances.

The National Bank of Cambodia supports fair, rules-based trade, noting that unilateral measures disrupt trade, investment and key sectors, disproportionately affecting vulnerable groups and hindering Sustainable Development Goals 8, 9 and 17. The National Bank of Cambodia emphasizes international cooperation, economic diversification and local currency use to reduce dollar dependency and enhance resilience. A multifaceted approach – spanning trade, labour, technology and finance – is critical to safeguarding inclusive growth and sustainable development. Fair globalization must prioritize equitable progress and stability.

China

[21 April 2025]

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development stipulates that States are strongly urged to refrain from promulgating and applying any unilateral economic, financial or trade measures not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations that impede the full achievement of economic and social development, particularly in developing countries.

Political and economic coercion by unilateral measures are exerted to press target countries to cave in and change their policies, serving certain country's hegemonic interests at the cost of the interests of target countries, and violating the principles of sovereign equality and non-interference in internal affairs. These measures are illegal in nature.

The US executes, in the name of national security, excessive restrictive policies and unilateral measures such as export control, trade remedy, Section 301 tariffs and Section 232 investigations. In 2024, the US administration fabricated various pretexts to impose 55 illegal unilateral sanctions against over 700 Chinese entities and individuals with tools, including the Export Control Entity List. In 2025, the US administration imposed so-called "reciprocal tariffs" globally. All these gravely trample on the basic norms of international relations, violate World Trade Organization rules, undermine the rules-based multilateral trading system and contravene the legitimate rights and interests of countries around the world. Such measures gravely sabotage the role of trade as a means of implementation for the 2030 Agenda and an engine for sustainable development, and deal a blow to international trade order and global economic development, especially the implementation of the 2030 Agenda by developing countries. These are typical acts of unilateralism, protectionism and economic bullying. The US, while pursuing "America First" and "America exceptionalism", is superseding the common good of the international community and advancing hegemonic interests at the cost of the legitimate interests of all countries. Such actions are widely opposed by the international community.

China firmly rejects unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction that have no basis in international law or authorization by the Security Council. China has all along opposed moves to overstretch the concept of national security or politicize and weaponize trade and technological issues. Development is an inalienable right of all countries, not the exclusive privilege of a few. International affairs should be addressed through broad-based consultation, and the future of the world should be decided by all countries. There has been no winner in trade or tariff wars. Protectionism leads nowhere. The international community should strengthen solidarity and cooperation, upholding the principles of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefit. It is crucial to uphold true multilateralism, jointly oppose unilateral economic measures and all forms of unilateralism and protectionism, collectively resist and oppose the US acts to exploit the world, defend the UN-centred international system and the World Trade Organization-centred multilateral trading system, and safeguard the legitimate rights and development prospects of developing countries, in certain cases for humanitarian reasons, because they have an impact on the most vulnerable population, in particular children, refugees and displaced persons.

Cuba

[Original: Spanish]
[15 April 2025]

Since 1962, the Government of the United States has imposed an economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba. For more than six decades, the effects of the harshest and longest-standing unilateral coercive system in history have persisted. It constitutes a systematic violation of the human rights of the Cuban people, the destructive impact of which is hindering the country's economic, cultural and social progress.

State and government entities of the United States, including the Department of the Treasury and the Department of Commerce, strictly apply the laws of Congress and the administrative provisions that comprise the blockade against Cuba. Those measures and their scope are intended to restrict the self-determination of the Cuban people and undermine the exercise of State sovereignty through direct and indirect interference in the internal affairs of our country.

Although the unjust blockade policy against Cuba had remained in force during practically his entire term, in January 2025, President Joseph Biden – among other belated measures of very limited scope – decided to remove Cuba from the Department of State list of countries that allegedly sponsor terrorism and to suspend the possibility of bringing action in United States courts under Title III of the Helms-Burton Act.

On 20 January 2025, President Donald Trump, on his first day in office, signed an executive order entitled "Initial Rescissions of Harmful Executive Orders and Actions", whereby he repealed a significant portion of the short-lived measures taken by his predecessor. Subsequently, the Department of State announced that the suspension of Title III of the Helms-Burton Act had been revoked and published an updated list of restricted Cuban entities.

This intensification of the economic war against Cuba represents total disregard for the firm position of the international community against the blockade, which has been expressed in 32 successive resolutions of the General Assembly.

The economic, commercial and financial blockade of the United States against Cuba imposes countless sacrifices on our people and constitutes the main obstacle to the development of the Cuban economy. From March 2023 to February 2024, the blockade caused material damage to Cuba estimated at $5,056.8 million. In February 2024, at current prices, the cumulative losses over more than six decades of implementation of this policy had amounted to $164,141,100,000. It is estimated that, in the absence of the blockade and at current prices, the country's gross domestic product could have grown by around 8 per cent in 2023.

The effects of the most severe measures include sanctions or threats of sanctions against shipping companies, carriers, insurers or reinsurers involved in the supply of fuel to Cuba, the tracking of Cuban financial transactions in order to cut off sources of income from foreign currency for the country, and the monitoring of international medical cooperation agreements.

The Government of the United States has used tourism, the main source of income for Cuba, as a political weapon against the country. It is aware of the importance of this sector for the island's development and is therefore determined to attack it. Between March 2023 and February 2024, the focus under the blockade on obstructing the recovery of the tourism sector caused losses amounting to $2,499.7 million.

To prevent foreign investment in Cuba and impede the normal course of the country's operations abroad, the Government of the United States uses various instruments and forms of pressure through its regulatory bodies. Companies, investors and entities from third countries are therefore suffering the consequences of this policy, while Cuba is facing serious difficulties in launching its development projects, generating income, making payments and acquiring essential inputs to meet the basic needs of its population.

For example, 18 days of blockade are equivalent to the annual maintenance cost (excluding fuel and investments) for the national electric power system (approximately $250 million). In addition, four months of blockade are equivalent to the financing necessary to guarantee the delivery of the standard family basket of products to the population for one year (approximately $1.6 billion).

The continued inclusion of Cuba on the spurious list of State sponsors of terrorism has reinforced the dissuasive and intimidating impact of the blockade. This has resulted in the termination of contracts, the loss of relations with banks, indebtedness, and delays in sending and receiving funds and goods, with incalculable costs for the Cuban people.

During the above-mentioned period, losses due to the geographical relocation of trade to more distant markets are estimated at $581.7 million. In addition, costs relating to freight, insurance and the use of commercial intermediaries, and the resulting increase in the cost of goods, amounted to $485.7 million.

In other words, the blockade is not only intended to suffocate Cuba economically, commercially and financially, but is also extraterritorial in nature, affecting third parties through the issuance of threats, the imposition of fines, the revocation or denial of visas and the possibility of being sued in United States courts on the basis of a fictitious claim to jurisdiction, all with the intention of including the international community in the unilateral coercive scheme.

As a result, the Cuban economy has come under extraordinary pressures, reflected in a decline in consumption levels and in the general well-being of the population.

The United States blockade against Cuba is aimed at depressing the economy, creating material shortages and damage to public services, provoking dissatisfaction and despair among the population, and subverting the legitimately established constitutional order.

Cuba is deeply grateful for the international expressions of solidarity it has received, as well as the international community's near-unanimous rejection of the United States blockade.

More than three decades since the first General Assembly resolution against the blockade, the Government of the United States continues to ignore the Assembly's many pronouncements calling for it to unconditionally eliminate its failed, unilateral and criminal policy against Cuba.

Following the trajectory that our country began more than six decades ago, with the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, and in which the Government has played – and continues to play – a fundamental role in guiding socioeconomic life, Cuba firmly rejects the imposition of any measures aimed at undermining the right to development of the peoples of the world.

Ethiopia

[15 April 2025]

Over the years, Ethiopia has been singled out for unilateral coercive measures. All the measures are taken with flagrant violation of international law and on the basis of the internal affairs of the country. The measures are also imposed during periods where international cooperation and solidarity are most needed to preserve peace and security, development and human rights. The unilateral coercive measures that Ethiopia have faced include suspension of mutual security cooperation, suspension of trade and financial activities. The suspension from trade arrangements has reversed Ethiopia's efforts to expand and diversify its exports and hasten economic growth and poverty alleviation. Ethiopia's suspension affected those industries, especially in manufacturing and textiles.

Unilateral coercive measures imposed on Ethiopia have had negative impacts on employment, trade relations and economic development. Workers, particularly women, have lost their jobs and many factories have closed. Consequently, supply chains were disrupted and Ethiopia's export capacity was reduced. By undermining

Ethiopia's industrialization efforts, such unilateral measures pushed back the gains made in poverty reduction and economic diversification, further exacerbating existing vulnerabilities. Ethiopia's suspension since January 2022 affected the continuous efforts towards economic reform, sustainable peace and prosperity.

Ethiopia remains committed to fostering peace, stability and economic progress and believes that constructive engagement rather than punitive economic isolation serves as the most effective means for sustainable development and lasting global cooperation. Adherence to the principles and objectives of the Charter of the United Nations, including respect for sovereignty, sovereign equality of States, non-interference in States' internal affairs and peaceful dispute resolution, must be upheld by all States at all times. All United Nations Member States should work together in ensuring that economic measures are used as instruments of growth rather than coercion. The international community should reject economic coercion to influence sovereign States and instead foster inclusive economic partnerships for shared prosperity.

Indonesia

[11 April 2025]

Indonesia opposes unilateral coercive measures, which have severely impacted countries' economy, development and humanitarian conditions, hindering their progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals. At a time when global efforts are focused on accelerating the Goals, any act that would impede other countries' capacity to fulfil their economic and social development is deemed intolerable.

Namibia

[15 April 2025]

Namibia has historically maintained strong ties with Cuba, Zimbabwe and Venezuela, among others, who are all countries under unilateral economic measures for decades.

Cuba

The US first imposed economic embargo on Cuba in 1960, which remains till today one of the longest-running economic sanctions in history. They have limited Cuba's ability to engage in international trade, which, in turn, affects Namibia. Disruptions in Cuba's economy has led to diminished trade opportunities for Namibia, especially in areas where both countries might have strengthened cooperation, such as agriculture and health.

The US embargo on Cuba restricts the country from trading freely with one of the world's largest economies and discourages other countries and companies from doing business with Cuba due to fear of secondary sanctions. Cuba struggles to import essential goods such as food, medicine, fuel and technology. It relies heavily on a few trading partners such as Venezuela, Russia and China. Limitations on Cuba's exports, especially sugar, tobacco, rum and nickel, face restricted market access. This limits Cuba's ability to generate foreign currency.

The sanctions have made it difficult for Cuba to achieve several Sustainable Development Goals. The sanctions contribute to widespread poverty by limiting economic growth and investment; food scarcity due to the difficulty of importing agricultural equipment; advanced healthcare technologies. Additionally, the embargo stifles tourism, foreign investment and entrepreneurship, limiting job opportunities and income generation.

Zimbabwe

The US began imposing sanctions on Zimbabwe in the early 2000s. They have several ripple effects that impact Namibia, given the geographical, historical and economic ties between the two countries. Economic hardship in Zimbabwe forced many Zimbabweans to migrate to neighbouring countries, including Namibia. This added pressure on Namibia's resources, social services and job market.

Namibia, as a member of the Southern African Development Community, is affected when a neighbouring country such as Zimbabwe is underperforming economically. It affects regional projects, cooperation and development plans. unilateral coercive measures on Zimbabwe discourages foreign direct investment in the region, including Namibia, because investors view Southern Africa as interconnected. It also affects tourism flows, as travellers may avoid the region altogether.

Sanctions severely affected Zimbabwe's ability to achieve Sustainable Development Goals, resulting in increased poverty due to job losses and inflation; food insecurity due to the collapse of agriculture; funding shortages, which led to poor educational facilities; a lack of medical supplies; and unemployment caused by economic contraction.

Venezuela

The US began imposing sanctions on Venezuela in 2015, targeting Venezuelan officials and companies. Over the years, these sanctions have expanded significantly, encompassing a travel ban, asset freeze and trade, investment and tourism restrictions.

Namibia has consistently called for the lifting of sanctions against Cuba, Zimbabwe and Venezuela, as these measures violate human rights and hinder development. This stance reflects Namibia's commitment to international law and its support for countries facing unfair and unjust economic coercion. Unilateral coercive measures have significant impacts on their economic stability, social development and human rights.

These measures often lead to severe economic hardships for targeted States. They restrict these countries' access to international markets, hinder trade relationships and limit foreign direct investment. As a result, these economies have face unprecedented challenge, leading to increased unemployment and reduced public services. Moreover, the unilateral coercive measures disrupt essential services, making it challenging for governments to provide basic social services. This negative effect is a violation of human rights by denying individuals access to basic necessities and services, which can lead to deteriorating living conditions, increased health risks and challenges in achieving personal and communal well-being.

The ability of the targeted States to meet Sustainable Development Goals is compromised. Economic sanctions divert resources away from critical sectors such as education, health and infrastructure, hindering progress toward these international commitments.

Suggestions on potential approaches to address issues:

- Encourage diplomatic negotiations between imposing and targeted countries to normalize relations.

- Encourage a shift from broad economic sanctions to more targeted measures focusing on individuals or entities responsible for human rights abuses based on evidence, while minimizing the measures disproportionately impacting ordinary citizens.
- Urgently ensure that humanitarian aid, including food and medical supplies, is exempt from sanctions unconditionally.
- Design programmes focusing on economic support and investment in targeted countries, particularly where benefiting the population.
- Establish a mechanism to monitor impacts to ensure that they produce desired outcomes without causing undue hardship to civilians.
- Strengthen multilateral dialogue by encouraging States to engage in open diplomatic dialogue through platforms such as the United Nations or the World Trade Organization to resolve disputes.
- Foster negotiation mechanism based on respect for sovereignty and international law, strengthening international law to discourage coercive economic practices violating human rights.

Peru

[15 April 2025]

Peru firmly rejects the imposition of unilateral economic measures that are used as instruments of political and economic coercion against developing countries. This type of action usually generates significant negative consequences, such as the disruption of local economies, the decrease in growth rates and the deterioration of the living conditions of the affected populations. In the current context, in which the international economic system faces multiple challenges, the adoption of unilateral economic measures can generate greater tensions, hinder compliance with multilateral commitments and delay collective efforts to achieve sustainable development. Strict respect for international law is therefore essential.

Qatar

[24 April 2025]

The State of Qatar opposes the imposition of unilateral coercive measures against any country in a manner contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, including obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law, and the fundamental principles of the multilateral trading system, and in a manner that leads to adverse effects on human rights, economic and social development and humanitarian consequences for the population, especially the most vulnerable groups, and impedes the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The State of Qatar opposes the imposition of any unilateral coercive measures that have negative humanitarian consequences or impede the delivery of basic humanitarian needs and the implementation of humanitarian activities. In this regard, the State of Qatar recalls the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and its support for General Assembly resolution 78/135.

Russian Federation

[Original: Russian]
[10 April 2025]

Unilateral economic measures by Western countries have a negative impact on international trade and development, undermine free competition and lead to increased fragmentation and protectionism on a global scale. International cooperation to combat the most important challenges facing all humankind, such as ensuring food and energy security and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, is becoming more difficult. Continued trade restrictions, including unilateral coercive measures, threaten the stability of world markets. A striking example is the increased volatility in the global energy market, which was caused by unilateral restrictions on the Russian fuel and energy sector (including the introduction of a so-called price cap on Russian petroleum products, restrictions against the tanker fleet, the blocking of financial transactions in dollars and euros, and restrictions on ship and cargo insurance). It is these factors that have driven up the prices of petroleum, petroleum products and natural gas. Such imbalances affect the entire world economy, especially the countries of the global South.

Unilateral economic measures applied in the form of sanctions, excessive tariffs, restrictions on developing countries' access to financial resources, increased climate requirements and other means of exerting pressure on independent States are methods of unfair competition that give Western economies an advantage and hinder the economic growth of developing countries. For example, the unilateral introduction of a carbon border adjustment mechanism by European countries will put European producers in a more favourable position in global markets, but may also create new significant barriers to international trade in certain types of goods, undermine the prospects for global economic growth and, ultimately, complicate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The application of unilateral economic measures directly threatens the food security of developing and least developed countries. Western sanctions against Russia are making it harder for the poorest countries in the global South and East to access Russian grain and fertilizers. Russian vessels cannot use European port terminals, through which agricultural products were previously transshipped. Western companies refuse to insure Russian cargo, and financial settlements are hampered due to the banking restrictions imposed by Western countries. All of this complicates transportation and increases the cost of delivering food and fertilizers from Russia to global markets, including to the countries most in need. The European Union has imposed protective tariffs on Russian grain imports and is considering similar measures for Russian fertilizers. Such a move, along with attempts to exclude Russia from agricultural supply chains, could lead to higher prices for agricultural exports and a new wave of global food inflation.

Syrian Arab Republic

[9 April 2025]

For many years, the Syrian Arab Republic has been subject to multiple layers of unilateral coercive measures in response to the oppressive Assad regime, particularly unilateral economic measures imposed by the US, EU and some other Western countries, including the UK, Canada and Australia, on Syrian public and private sectors and even third parties that conduct financial transactions with sanctioned entities. The US and EU issued a general licence and eased some of unilateral measures imposed on Syria, although a welcomed step, but the Syrian Arab Republic looks forward to the full lifting of these measures as the reason of its imposition no longer exists.

Unilateral coercive measures imposed on the Syrian Arab Republic hindered the humanitarian response in the country, including disaster risk reduction. It has also directly targeted vital services and sectors such as health, water, fuel, petroleum supplies, energy, transportation, telecommunications and technology. Unilateral coercive measures imposed on Syrian banks, including the Central Bank, have led to the freezing or severing of financial relations with foreign banks, which has led to the inability to carry out the financial transactions necessary for all the vital sectors. Unilateral coercive measures imposed on public and private hospitals in Syria, including children's specialized hospitals, and the prevention of international companies from selling medicines and necessary medical equipment to Syria, have exacerbated the vulnerability of the health sector. Unilateral coercive measures imposed on importing oil and its derivatives to Syria have caused an acute shortage of fuel used for heating, transportation and electric power generation.

The measures that affected the electricity sector have led to extensive damage to other vital sectors and basic services and to the deterioration of the humanitarian situation of citizens, which has negatively impacted their daily lives, including the need for electricity for studying and education, the provision of needed medical care and the operation of critical equipment in health facilities, such as incubators for newborns. In addition, the lack of electricity affected the operation of water pumping stations for drinking and household use and for irrigation, which has negatively impacted the quality of water and led to the spread of many diseases due to the use of polluted water. Unilateral coercive measures imposed on the import of fertilizers needed for agricultural food production, or requirements for their local production, have caused damage to Syria's agricultural production capacity, contributed to a sharp rise in the cost of locally produced food and undermined food security for Syrians.

Unilateral coercive measures deeply affect the Government's ability to properly provide basic services leading to social, economic and health impacts and severely hinder reconstruction plans. The Government is exerting efforts to secure basic supplies, provide health- care services and meet basic needs. The United Nations should have a stronger position against unilateral economic measures, which contradict its Charter, and must exercise its power to call those imposing unilateral coercive measures to lift them without preconditions.

Tunisia

[15 April 2025]

Indicated disagreement with the imposition of unilateral economic measures as instruments of political and economic coercion against developing countries.

United Republic of Tanzania

[27 March 2025]

Unilateral coercive measures used as a means of political and economic coercion against developing countries should be avoided. Instead, constructive dialogue and engagement should be promoted as the preferred means of addressing differences.

Zimbabwe

[15 April 2025]

On 21 December 2001, President George W. Bush signed the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act into law. Through it, the US imposed economic sanctions on Zimbabwe.

On 18 February 2002, the EU imposed sanctions on Zimbabwe, which included an arms embargo and financial and travel restrictions, as part of the EU Council Common Position. Since then, the restrictive measures framework has been renewed regularly, with the latest renewal extending the sanctions up to 20 February 2026.

Countries such as Canada and Australia still maintain sanctions on Zimbabwe in the form of a ban on arms sales, asset freezes and restrictions on financial transactions.

On 4 March 2024, the US Office of Foreign Assets Control designated 11 Zimbabweans, including the President, His Excellency, Dr. Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, and 3 entities, under the Global Magnitsky programme. As a result, the Office blocked property owned by those individuals and entities within the US or in control of US persons.

Sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe, in addition to restricting trade with imposing countries, deter private players from investing in and doing business in Zimbabwe. Potential investors and businesses fear punitive measures from Governments, leading to overcompliance and the overly restrictive application of sanctions on target countries. This further exacerbates the negative impact of sanctions on target countries that include Zimbabwe. In the US, the Government of Zimbabwe can transact only through the United Nations Federal Credit Union. Other commercial banks no longer do business with Zimbabwe due to compliance issues.

In March 2023, fire trucks destined for Zimbabwe were seized by Lithuanian authorities. The reason provided was that the fire trucks or certain components on the fire tenders were manufactured by a Belarusian company, which is under EU sanctions. This move unfairly disenfranchises Zimbabwe from accessing fire trucks, which would be critical in supporting firefighting operations, protecting life and property, as well as preserving Zimbabwe's world heritage sites and the crucial crops that defied the devastating El Niño-induced drought.

Additionally, the imposition of unilateral economic measures increases the perception of risk with regard to international finance. As a result, the cost of credit significantly increases, contributing to Zimbabwe's high debt burden and unsustainable debt repayment levels. The Government has, consequently, been compelled to divert much needed resources meant for development projects for the servicing of debt. This has constricted Zimbabwe's fiscal space to fund development initiatives, which hinders progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

Zimbabwe joins other Member States in denouncing unilateralism and coercion against developing countries. It supports enhancing multilateralism, dialogue and the peaceful settlement of disputes for the equal enjoyment of human rights by all Member States.

Zimbabwe reiterates the call for the international community to unite in solidarity with victims of these measures and collectively demand the unconditional lifting of the unjust blockades on sovereign States, whose devastating effects have been acutely felt by ordinary citizens of the affected countries.

European Union

[15 April 2025]

Restrictive measures ("sanctions") are tools adopted by a broad range of States and international actors.

In line with its founding treaties, the EU decides independently on its foreign and security policy and adopts within its jurisdiction any measure that it considers necessary to safeguard universal values and advance its foreign policy objectives, in full compliance with its international obligations (see, in particular, article 21 of the Treaty on EU).

EU restrictive measures are lawful, legitimate and non-violent means for achieving EU foreign policy objectives. They are adopted to defend universal values and international law, preserve peace and security, support democracy, the rule of law and human rights and address specific crises situations, in line with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. They are, in some cases, adopted to fill a void in situations where the security Council is prevented by some of its members from taking action and are particularly important when a Council member is involved in a violation of international law.

EU restrictive measures comply with international law, including international human rights law, international refugee law and international humanitarian law. EU courts, which scrutinize the legality of EU restrictive measures, have consistently ensured the compliance of EU restrictive measures with international law based on commonly accepted and objective criteria.

EU restrictive measures have no extraterritorial application. They do not create obligations for non-EU operators, unless their business has a link with the EU. They essentially restrict business within the EU legal order; in other words, the EU exercises precisely its right to decide with whom it and the operators under its jurisdiction engages in trade. At the same time, the EU does not recognize the extraterritorial application of laws adopted by third countries in violation of international law.

EU restrictive measures are based on clear listing criteria and require legally robust and compelling evidence. They are temporary in nature, requiring regular periodic renewal (every year or even every six months) following a full review of each individual measure, including the reasons for listing. EU measures are also subject to judicial review. Designated persons and entities and third States may challenge EU restrictive measures before the Court of Justice of the EU, and thus exercise, inter alia, their due process rights and their right to a fair trial. The Court of Justice of the EU ensures that these rights are protected.

Having clarified the legal nature and effects of EU restrictive measures, their relation to humanitarian aid and development assistance is described below.

It should be recalled that the EU, together with its member States, are the world largest donor of development assistance (41 per cent) and the second largest donor of humanitarian aid (28 per cent), including in States concerned by EU sanctions. EU sanctions aim to halt violations of human rights and other violations in these countries, and the EU remains fully committed to providing humanitarian assistance and supporting sustainable development therein, despite the ongoing violations. Team Europe's total official development assistance in 2023 amounted to record 95.5 billion euros.

Indicative specific examples can be drawn from the cases of Syria, Guatemala and Myanmar. The EU imposed restrictive measures on the previous regime in Syria in response to its widespread and systematic violations of human rights and international law. At the same time, the EU, together with its member States, continued to be the largest humanitarian donor to Syrians since the beginning of the conflict in 2011. The EU and its member States have mobilized over 35.3 billion euros to help Syria and its neighbouring countries in addressing the consequences of the war. In the cases of Guatemala and Myanmar, the EU imposed targeted sanctions on specific individuals. This did not prevent the EU and its member States from being the second largest donors of bilateral official development assistance to those countries.

Furthermore, EU restrictive measures do not target the civilian population and the delivery of humanitarian aid. They are carefully tailored to affect only those responsible for the grave violations of international law and human rights. Food, medicines and emergency supplies do not fall within their scope. In fact, the EU takes all possible measures to preserve the humanitarian and development spaces, in relation to which the EU remains the largest provider of financial assistance. With this aim, the EU swiftly implemented Security Council resolution 2664 (2022) and went a few steps further, having introduced equivalent (and broader) humanitarian exemptions across most of its autonomous restrictive measures regimes. The EU also constantly undertakes action and spares no effort to prevent or address overcompliance and any unintended consequences of restrictive measures.

Thus, the narrative on so-called unilateral coercive measures does not apply to EU restrictive measures. Nevertheless, it is concerning that this politically motivated narrative, which is based on generic allegations and factual inaccuracies, is misleading; it is often instrumentalized with political purposes, diverting attention from the reasons why sanctions are adopted. It is these reasons that often are at the origin of serious challenges to development.

With the above in mind, it is the EU position that the present report should focus on two aspects that are necessary to illuminate the issue.

First, in the context of maintenance of international peace and security, it should focus on the proliferation of violations of international law and human rights and the consequences of not taking action, including through restrictive measures, in the face of such violations and other actions jeopardizing international peace and security.

All United Nations Member States have the obligation to preserve the international order based on the Charter of the United Nations. The EU and its member States take their responsibility to the international community seriously and act when grave violations of international law and human rights are committed, even when that means imposing measures that restrict business opportunities for EU operators.

Second, given its focus on development, the report should not ignore but rather highlight development – but also humanitarian – policies pursued by entities such as the EU and its member States, despite the imposition of restrictive measures. This is necessary to ensure a comprehensive and accurate representation of the relevant policy landscape and to avoid any misleading implications or conclusions.

Lastly, as stressed during the consultations that took place in the Second Committee on General Assembly resolution 78/135 by which the report was mandated, the EU and its member States expect the report to be balanced, objective and based on facts, as well as a robust analysis of causality. It should not be used to propagate false political narratives pushed by some delegations.