

[Remarks by dr. Fidel Castro Ruz, president of the Republic of Cuba, in the welcome ceremony of U.S. President James E. Carter at Jose Marti International Airport. May 12, 2002 \[1\]](#)

Date:

12/05/2002

Your Excellency Mr. James Carter, ex President of the United States:

Distinguished Mrs. Rosalynn Carter and other members of the selective group of friends in your entourage:

More than once, during our brief encounters abroad, I had expressed my wishes for you to visit Cuba. Today those sincere wishes are a reality.

For a period of time we coincided in holding responsibilities as leaders of our respective countries; you, as the leader of a huge and powerful nation; I, in a small island, just 90 miles away from your country.

It is no secret that for almost a century there have not been optimal relations between the two states, and they still are not.

However, I wish to state that in the four years of your tenure as President, you had the courage to make efforts to change the course of those relations. That is why those of us who were witnesses to that attitude see you with respect.

A tangible evidence that it was not a useless undertaking is that, despite seemingly insurmountable difficulties, misunderstandings and disagreements, during your term in office three major events took place, among others: the opening of the Interests Sections in Washington and Havana, the demarcation of the maritime borders between Cuba, Mexico and the United States, and the recognition of the right of Americans to travel to Cuba, something that would unfortunately be later suspended by others.

There might be those who think that our invitation for you to visit our country is a shrewd maneuver with a mean political purpose. I very sincerely say that it is a deserved recognition of your attitude as President of the United States of America towards Cuba, and of your subsequent history as a personality who enjoys international recognition, someone devoted to the struggle for reducing or alleviating some of the tragedies afflicting humanity today, or to building an awareness about them, but always seeking for any possibility to bring peace and understanding to all peoples.

A man that, in the middle of the cold war and from the depth of an ocean of prejudice, misinformation and distrust on both sides of the Strait, dared to try to improve relations between both countries deserves respect.

The Cuban people, one of whose most remarkable qualities is selflessness, admires and respects courage and espouses any just cause.

Our country will welcome you and your delegation with its most sincere hospitality and, with humility, it will show you its human and social work. Your communication with our people will be facilitated, so that

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you can express yourself freely whether or not we agree with part of what you say, or with everything you say. You will have free access to every place you want to go, and we shall not take offense for any contact you may wish to make, even with those who do not share our endeavors.

Although in the agreed itinerary a contact has been scheduled with our scientists from the Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology Institute, if you are interested and if you wish, you may have free and complete access --together with any specialists of your choosing-- to that or any other of our most prestigious scientific research centers, some of which have been recently accused --just a few days before your visit-- of producing biological weapons.

We are a patriotic and honorable people that will never accept impositions or threats from anyone but we are also sincere friends of the United States, particularly of all the good Americans --who are many-- and we keep discovering many more.

We welcome you with warm and sincere friendship, and we honestly hope that your visit to Cuba is not used by anyone to question your patriotism, to diminish your merits or to affect the assistance that your Foundation provides to so many poor, neglected and forsaken people as there are in the world today.

Thank you, very much.

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