

Questionnaire:

The impact of unilateral economic measures as a means of political and economic coercion against developing countries

Background

The General Assembly resolution A/RES/78/135 of 21 December 2023 on *Unilateral economic measures as a means of political and economic coercion against developing countries*:

In Paragraph 2: “Urges 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”.

In Paragraph 7: “Requests the Secretary-General to monitor the imposition of unilateral economic measures as a means of political and economic coercion and to study, inter alia, with the support and cooperation of the resident coordinators and United Nations country teams, the impact of such measures on the affected countries, including the impact on trade and development;”

In Paragraph 8: “Also requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its eightieth session a report on the implementation of the present resolution, with a particular focus on the impacts of unilateral economic measures on the achievement of sustainable development.”

The present questionnaire aims at collecting relevant information for the preparations of that report.

Contact information:

Please provide the contact information of the person responsible for answering this questionnaire.

1. Country (or Organization): **Namibia**
2. Department/Division/Unit: **Permanent Mission to the United Nations**
3. Name of contact person:
4. Title:
5. Email:

Questions:

6. Does your country (or does your organization) agree with the imposition of unilateral economic measures as instruments of political and economic coercion against developing countries?

☐ Yes

☒ No

7. Please provide a brief explanation for your answer to question 6: (max 300 words)

Unilateral economic, financial, or trade measures are one of the major obstacles to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in developing countries that are targeted by these measures. They undermine the full enjoyment of human rights, particularly the rights of nations to pursue development and the rights of individuals to an adequate standard of living that ensures their health and well-being. This encompasses access to essential needs such as food, medical care, housing, and necessary social services. In these conditions, vulnerable populations often suffer the most, exacerbating issues such as poverty and inequality.

The continued enactment and application of unilateral economic, financial or trade measures that are inconsistent with the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations have a negative impact on the capacity of targeted countries to recover from the effects of global or national shocks – climate, conflict, pandemics, economic crises- therefore compromises their ability to strengthen resilience to future shocks and pursue sustainable development.

The economic strain resulting from these measures can lead to social unrest or political instability. Citizens may become frustrated with their governments, potentially resulting in increased dissent and conflict.

Unilateral measures can strain diplomatic relations and create divisions between countries. They may also lead to retaliatory actions that escalate tensions and contribute to geopolitical instability.

8. Has your country been affected by (or, has your organization observed countries been affected by) unilateral economic measures during the period 2023-2025?

☒ Yes

☐ No

9. If yes (question 8), please explain target countries, the nature of the measures, country imposing the measures, dates when the measures were imposed, and whether the measures are still binding. (max 300 words)

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

Cuba

The United States first imposed economic embargo on Cuba in 1960, which remains till today one of the longest-running economic sanctions in history. Economic measures imposed on Cuba have limited its 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 U.S. embargo on Cuba restricts the country from trading freely with one of the world's largest economies and also discourages other countries and companies from doing business with Cuba due to fear of secondary sanctions.

Cuba struggles to import essential goods like food, medicine, fuel, and technology. It relies heavily on a few trading partners like Venezuela, Russia, and China.

Export limitation on Cuba 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 SDG's. 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 United States began imposing sanctions on Zimbabwe in the early 2000s and these sanctions have remained in place. The U.S. sanctions on Zimbabwe 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, in search of jobs and better living conditions. This added pressure on Namibia's resources, social services, and job market.

Namibia, as a member of SADC, is affected when neighbouring country like Zimbabwe is underperforming economically. It affects regional projects, cooperation, and development plans. Unilateral Coercive Measures on Zimbabwe discourages foreign investment in the region, including Namibia, because investors view Southern Africa as interconnected. It also affects tourism flows, as travelers 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 collapse of agriculture; funding shortages which led to poor educational facilities; lack of medical supplies; including unemployment caused by economic contraction.

Venezuela

The United States began imposing sanctions on Venezuela in 2015 and these unilateral measures remain in place, targeting Venezuelan officials and companies.

Over the years, these sanctions have expanded significantly, encompassing travel ban, asset freeze, trade, investment and tourism restrictions.

Namibia has consistently called for the lifting of sanctions against Cuba, Zimbabwe, 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.

10. If yes (question 8), please briefly describe the impact of the unilateral economic measure(s) on the country, including on its achievement of sustainable development and trade. (max 300 words)

Unilateral coercive measures have significant impacts on the above-mentioned States, particularly 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 investment. As a result, these economies have face unprecedented challenge, leading to increased unemployment and reduced public services. Moreover, the unilateral 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 (SDGs) is compromised. Economic sanctions divert resources away from critical sectors such as education, health, and infrastructure development, hindering progress toward these international commitments.

11. Please include any additional comments and suggestions. (max 200 words)

Our suggestions focus on potential approaches to address the issues arising from these sanctions:

Encourage diplomatic negotiations between the imposing and targeted countries Cuba aimed at normalizing relations.

Imposing countries can be encouraged to shift from broad economic sanctions to more targeted measures that focus specifically on individuals or entities responsible for human rights abuses based on evidence while minimizing the measures that disproportionately impact ordinary citizens. This could help alleviate the humanitarian consequences of the sanctions.

There is an urgent need to ensure that humanitarian aid, including food and medical supplies, is exempt from sanctions unconditionally. This could involve creating streamlined processes for NGOs to deliver assistance without facing penalties.

Design programmes that focus on economic support and investment in targeted countries, particularly in sectors that benefit the population. This could involve partnerships with international and regional financial institutions that aim to stimulate economic recovery.

Establish a mechanism for the monitoring and evaluation of sanctions' impacts to ensure they are producing the desired outcomes without causing undue hardship on the civilian population. Strengthening multilateral dialogue and diplomacy, by encouraging affected states and sanctioning state to engage in open diplomatic dialogue through international platforms like the UN or WTO to resolve disputes without resorting to unilateral action.

Foster negotiation mechanism based on respect for sovereignty and international law. Strengthen the role of international law to discourage coercive economic practices that violate human rights.