

Press Release N° 31- Food Monitor Program

Deep energy crisis in Cuba

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During the last two weeks, the lack of fuel has hit the Cuban population even harder. Both official and independent media have reported the deficit of megawatts throughout the country. This is due not only to the country's economic insolvency to pay for oil; but also to the lack of maintenance, spare parts and economy to repair and update thermoelectric plants.

For several days, the official media Cubadebate has been publishing, based on information from the Cuban Electrical Union, the lack of generation availability for peak hours. Thus, for example, on September 17, 1,347 MW were affected at 10 p.m.; however, power cuts were present throughout that day, without even being able to be restored in the early hours of the morning. Two days later, 56 distributed generation plants were out of service due to fuel shortage plus eight broken units of the Mariel, Santa Cruz, Nuevitas, Cienfuegos, Felton and Renté plants.

While in Havana the “solidarity blackouts” have returned, the situation in the rest of the provinces is alarming. Inhabitants of Cienfuegos, for example, report that

the energy crisis in the country has worsened even more in the last fifteen or twenty days, coinciding with the beginning of the school year and the end of summer vacations. In the week that has just ended, we have counted approximately 100 non-consecutive hours of lack of electricity in the municipality. In our popular council, which has more than 20,000 inhabitants, the effects have been exceptionally long due to its population density.

Similar situations are experienced in Santiago de Cuba, Guantanamo and Granma, respectively:

The issue of the current in my area is somewhat hostile, they take it away every day and the situation is unbearable. In addition to the heat, it is impossible to sleep at night. There are families (like mine) that do not have anything to cook with because they do not have gas and without electricity they are left in the air.

The blackouts are quite strong, we are without power many times a day; you really have to be a magician to be able to do things around the house. It's a big hassle, unbelievably nothing happens. People say, “It's gone; it's arrived, they're going to take it away, what are we going to do.” But they do nothing. The same government's indifference that puts it on and takes it off and gives the same thing to the people who suffer from them is the same. It is incredible how almost nobody understands that this situation is a lack of government management, that it is their

fault and that they do nothing to fix it. Five years ago they said that the blackouts were going to be a temporary situation, this September we are five years old. We are still the same and they are still in charge.

The power goes off at 8 am until 2 pm; then they take it off again at 8 pm and put it back on at 12 am. That's the normal cycle; although there are also intermittent blackouts that they don't announce and you don't know when it's going to come back on. Those are the worst because they catch you unawares and break your equipment, as they are accompanied by voltage surges and dips; so they have us all bristling.

In the midst of this energy debacle, the Third International Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Fair was held in Cuba. A few days before, the Minister of Energy and Mines, Vicente de la O Levy, had declared in the national TV program Mesa Redonda (Round Table) that by 2025 it would be possible to generate one minute of electricity a year without consuming imported fuel, although the rest of the time we will continue to suffer the same blackouts.

Meanwhile, the United Nations resident coordinator in Cuba, Francisco Pichón, said that UN agencies have mobilized 22.4 million dollars as part of the cooperation framework with the island to meet the 2030 goal of generating 24% of electricity from renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind. On the other hand, the Unión Eléctrica received 10 electric generators as a donation from the People's Republic of China, which will supply only 18 MW. However, these solutions, both in the medium and short term, do not even alleviate the very serious energy situation suffered by the country.

This situation, in turn, aggravates the deep food crisis that Cubans are going through. In the first place, the cooking appliances in most Cuban homes, due to the government's own Energy Revolution program, are electric. Therefore, every time the power is cut off, thousands of people are forced to look for alternative fuels such as charcoal or kerosene, and many more are simply unable to eat, since due to inflation of more than 400% it is not an option to buy food made outside the home. Secondly, in a country where the lack of food has been a chronic fact for several years, the lack of electricity causes the little food that the population can get to spoil for lack of refrigeration. Likewise, these circumstances do not allow the elderly, babies or throat cancer patients, for example, who require soft or liquid diets, to feed themselves because they cannot liquefy the food.

Moreover, the lack of electricity also affects the supply of running and drinking water to the population. Generally, blackout times coincide with the pumping schedule. This means that the hundreds of thousands of homes that need to pump water to storage tanks using electric pumps are unable to do so, leaving them without water for drinking, cooking and personal and domestic hygiene.

From Food Monitor Program we remind that it is the obligation of the Government and related companies to guarantee stable electricity supply to the population, taking into account that it is a charged service, it is not free. Therefore, it cannot demand more sacrifices from Cubans with promises of long-term improvement that it always ends up not fulfilling.

