

# Cuba cheers end to U.N. abuse monitoring

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HAVANA --

Cuba on Wednesday cheered the new U.N. human rights watchdog's agreement to stop monitoring alleged abuses on the island, with Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque saying the decision left the United States "hanging and we yanked away the ladder."

The U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva agreed Tuesday to discontinue investigations into the rights situation in Cuba and Belarus, but to continue monitoring Israel. The move drew immediate fire from the U.S., which has crusaded to focus attention on the human rights situation in Cuba.

At a news conference, Perez Roque called the decision "a resounding, undisputed and historic victory" that "defeats the manipulations of the United States against Cuba in Geneva."

"I can understand the annoyance of the Bush regime. I can understand its feelings of frustration that, in the end, a little island in its way has won victory and gained the support of the international community," Perez Roque said.

State Department spokesman Sean McCormack earlier issued a statement that the United States was "disappointed" by an agreement it considered "seriously flawed."

Cuba has refused to allow visits to the island by most international rights monitors, including those assigned by the previous U.N. rights watchdog agency.

Cuba says it respects human rights more than many wealthy nations do by guaranteeing broad social services including largely free health care, housing and education, and heavily subsidized food and transportation.

The foreign minister said the government has made "enormous advances in economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights."

"That doesn't mean we don't recognize imperfections and we don't have goals and dreams that are much higher than what we've accomplished," he said of human rights. "But we believe that no one in the world can say that their situation is perfect."