

# Statement Hints at Castro's Retirement

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MEXICO CITY — [Fidel Castro](#) indicated Monday in a statement read on state television that he was willing to hand over the reins of [Cuba's](#) government to a younger generation of leaders. But his statement remained silent on whether he was speaking hypothetically or had a transition plan in mind.

“My basic duty is not to cling to office, nor even more so, to obstruct the rise of people much younger, but to pass on experiences and ideas whose modest value arises from the exceptional era in which I lived,” said the statement attributed to Mr. Castro, who is 81.

The ailing Mr. Castro, acting in a sort of emeritus role, has produced numerous commentaries in the 16 months since he had abdominal surgery and temporarily handed over power to his younger brother, Raúl, who is 76. But none of the statements until now have addressed the important question of Mr. Castro's future as Cuba's president, a position he has held for nearly five decades.

The most recent speculation in Havana had been that Mr. Castro might be trying to make a comeback. His health was said to be improving, and on Dec. 2 he was officially nominated as a candidate for the next National Assembly. The assembly meets in March to choose a 31-member Council of State, which will select the next president.

Because only assembly members qualify for the top job, Mr. Castro's nomination as a candidate seemed to rule out the notion that he was retiring from politics and ceding power to Raúl, the defense minister and constitutionally designated successor.

Fidel Castro's future is considered a very delicate affair, analysts say, given his singular role in running the country. Only he can decide to opt out of the presidency, and those below him in the ranks, including his brother, have been careful not to be seen as pressuring him to cede power despite his health problems.

In his latest statement, read on the nightly discussion program “Round Table,” Mr. Castro did not speak of any future leaders he envisioned governing Cuba.