

**Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of Cuba, 2<sup>nd</sup> circle**  
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**Submitted by the Greek-Cuban Friendship and Solidarity Association**

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## **I. Introduction**

1. This submission contains the main points that the Greek-Cuban Friendship and Solidarity Association would like to emphasize in relation to the Universal Periodic Review of Cuba regarding human rights.
2. The Greek-Cuban Friendship and Solidarity Association has maintained for nearly 50 years now a sincere dialog with Cuban officials and common citizens on literally all topics concerning social and political organization of Cuban society.
3. Since 2009 we had been able, through several visits and exchanges, to collect further evidence and first hand information on the related issues.

## **II. Basic human rights**

1. The victory of the Cuban revolution, the culmination of an almost continuous struggle for national emancipation and social justice, has transformed the island from an exploited semi-protectorate to a sovereign country. The people of Cuba has painfully, under extreme military, political and economic pressure, managed to construct a society free from external or internal exploitation which guaranties the main human rights unfortunately denied to billions of our fellow-men in both poor and rich countries all over the world.
2. Race and colour discriminations have been abolished. We have never encountered or heard of cases of racial hatred in Cuba, as we regrettably see and read about now days in our own country and in many other countries.
3. Religious beliefs are respected in Cuba. A Greek Orthodox church was inaugurated in Havana by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in 2003.
4. The Cuban constitution consecrates fundamental and advanced social and political rights of women and children, Article 44 explicitly provides for the equal opportunities among men and women. For example, among the university students, women count more than the half. Women participate actively in the political life. More than 1/3 of the members of the National Assembly are women, ranking Cuba very highly on world level on terms of female participation.
5. Through an organized economy, not aiming at producing the greatest profit for a minority, but to provide in a more or less general welfare, under dire conditions, Cuba was in 2009 the only Latin American country which had achieved to put an end to child undernourishment, a situation that still exists even in countries of Central Europe.
6. Cuba has established and maintained exemplary health and education systems acknowledged for by the official bodies of the pertinent international organizations. According to the president of the

International Paediatric Association, as a result of the Cuban public healthcare system, which guarantees to all people free of charge access, the infant mortality rate in 2010 was very low even when compared to that of highly developed countries. In October 2009, Dr. Margaret Chan, Director-General of the World Health Organization complimented the "extraordinary efforts made by the public health system of Cuba, the work perpetrated in first care by the local communities and the equal opportunities of all the people to health care facilities".

Cuba's Latin American School of Medicine trains students from around 30 different nations at no charge, giving first priority to candidates who come from poor communities and know, first-hand, what it means to live without access to essential medical care.

7. Cuba has long ago (1962) eradicated illiteracy. Cuban literacy educators trained during the campaign later went on to assist in literacy campaigns in fifteen other countries, for which a Cuban organization was awarded the King Sejong Literacy Prize by UNESCO. The Cuban program against illiteracy "Yes, I can" is active not only in Latin America but also in Australia, New Zealand, Portugal and Spain.
8. Although a poor country, Cuba has for more than a half a century tried in every way to help other people in their fight for independence. Thousands of Cuban volunteers, teachers, doctors and other medical personnel, scientists and technicians have worked, sometimes in perilous conditions to help to establish and organize the inexistent or rudimentary medical and educational services in many African and Latin American countries.
9. The Cuban constitution guaranties and aims at the active participation of the citizens in political affairs and control of the state and political apparatuses at every level. Deputies are revocable by their constituents.

### **III. Main developments since 2009**

1. Cuba has accepted a high number of suggestions and recommendations arising from the first cycle of the Universal Periodic Review in 2009.
2. UNESCO in its 2011 Report on Lifelong Learning underlined the high educational development of Cuba, rated 14<sup>th</sup> in the world. UNICEF representative in Cuba also highlighted the attention to children's rights in Cuba in November 2011.
3. As a result of the Cuban public healthcare system, which guarantees to all people free of charge access, the infant mortality rate in 2011 was 4.9 per 1.000, and the maternal mortality rate 40.6 per 100,000, that is a very low rate internationally, comparable with developed countries.
4. According to the 2011 United Nations Development Program (UNDP) report, Cuba's Human Development Index (HDI) rank in Latin America in

2011 was # 5, up from # 6 in 2009 and this was achieved despite the low Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which is a central component of the HDI.

5. According to a new Millenium Development Goals Report, Cuba is among the 20 best performing countries in the world and will be one of the first countries that will fulfill these goals set by the United Nations Organization in 2000.

#### **IV. Obstacles and problems**

1. Against the will of the vast majority of the world countries as expressed in successive UN General Assembly resolutions, the USA administration maintains the blockade on Cuba, trying as it did in the past through military interventions, financing of mercenaries, terrorist activities, to impose to the Cuban people a kind of government, economic system and social organization suitable to the USA interests.
2. The consequences of the blockade are cruel especially in sensitive social sectors, very relevant to the women and children rights like the healthcare system. From May 2010 to April 2011, negative impacts on the health sector were around 15 million dollars.
3. The EU "Common Position" on Cuba which seeks to condition Cuban people's sovereign choices and impose unequal relations.