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7<sup>th</sup> of October 2012

To  
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**UPR Submission – Cuba – Session 22 April – 3 May 2013**  
From Jose Marti Cultural Association, Swedish branch

The Jose Marti Cultural Association is the Swedish branch of the international *Jose Marti Cultural Society* that was originally founded as a Cuban NGO the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 1995 and now has branches in several European and Latin American countries. The Swedish branch is registered in Sweden as a non-profit NGO.

The NGO is named after the the Cuban philosopher, journalist, writer and leader Jose Marti, who initiated the Cuban war of independence against the Spanish colonial government in 1895. The main aim of the Swedish NGO is to promote inter-cultural exchange between Swedish and Cuban scientists, artists, intellectuals and cultural workers for mutual development and benefit. Our branch has since its inauguration in April 2012 worked closely together with a broad section of Cuban cultural associations in Cuba as well as in exile and have a close cooperation to several Cuban NGOs.

Jose Marti Cultural Association, Sweden  
Submission to the UPR on Cuba scheduled for April 2013

As a relatively new NGO in Sweden, founded in April 2012, the Jose Marti Cultural Association (JMCA) can't say that we as an organization can provide a before and after perspective on the Cuban development since the first UPR of Cuba in 2009. Though many of our board member have visited Cuba on several occasions both before and after the foundation of our organization, we will focus our report on the actual Human Rights situation in relationship with some of the conclusions of the 2009 UPR.

First and foremost we would like to point out that the main obstacle that is expressed by our Cuban counterparts for a continuous economical, social and democratic development of their nation, is the US blockade that has been imposed on the Cuban nation for over five decades. Besides the severe economical effects of the blockade imposes on the Cuban society, every sector of the Cuban society is suffering by the different aspects of the restraints that are implied by the blockade.

Our counterparts in the cultural and intellectual sectors of the Cuban Society has pointed out that the blockade limits their access to modern technology witch makes it harder and more expensive to exercise their freedoms on the internet. The exclusion of Cuba from the world market by the extraterritorial laws of the US limits e.g. also the access to wood pulp that difficult the possibility for all Cuban organizations to publish news letters and other publications that are fundamental for profundization of the Cuban democracy. These two examples may not be the most severe limitations that are a result of the blockade, but are a way to illustrate that many measures demanded by sectors of the Cuban civil society are made almost impossible due the the US-blockade, and the main struggle of almost any well established Cuban NGO is to overcome these limitations that they have no way of influencing due to the fact that they are imposed upon them y a foreign government.

Despite of the severe limitations of the blockade we can see that much has been made by the Cuban government to follow the recommendations of the first UPR from 2009.

We are glad to see that Cuba has developed it's participatory democracy trough the 2010-2011 national debate on the *Economical and social guidelines* which after the popular consultation resulted in in a series of measures that have profunded several liberties of the Cuban citizens as well as started several investigations on how to facilitate the freedom of travel, resolving the housing problem and strengthening and further develop the Cuban populations economical and social rights through the well managed welfare and cultural sectors. About 7-8million Cubans participated in the debates which resulted in over 160.000 proposals that were added or incorporated in the final document.

We are also glad to see that the government decision to put a moratorium on the death penalty is still in effect.

To comment specially on the points of interest of our organization we can see that may of the UPR recommendations from 2009 have been very well responded to by the Cuban civil society and it's government. Especially whet it comes to the further strengthening of the Cuban citizens political-, social-, economic- and cultural rights and further develop it's international cooperation in the mentioned fields, there has been a continuous progress. The government support for a further development of the countries digital infrastructure will open new spaces for it's citizens to participate in open debates an find new forms of exercising their fundamental political rights

Lastly we have trough our discussions with members of the Cuban civil society been given the

privilege to closely follow the debates among Cuban intellectuals and cultural workers that are taken place in an atmosphere of open critique aimed at improving the society. The total freedom of artistic expression is not only guaranteed in the constitution, but are also practiced by the Cuban intellectuals and artists as well as supported and given a platform by the cultural ministry of the country. Even thou there is a vast lack of recourses as a result of the US blockade, the cultural rights and the artistic freedom is still a given prioritized position within the Cuban society.

New spaces for open and critical debate has also been opened since the last UPR, in the mayor daily news papers and the public TV to strengthen the popular participation and the freedom of expression in the form as it is guaranteed in the Cuban constitution.

Ola Nilsson  
7<sup>th</sup> of October 2012  
President of the Jose Marti Cultural Association