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Independent Information for the Universal Periodic Review (UPR)

The Österreichisch-Kubanische Gesellschaft, ÖKG (Austrian-Cuban Association):

The goal of the association is to promote amicable relations and cultural exchange between the people of Austria and Cuba. The association is open to all people sharing this goal regardless of the differences between the Austrian and the Cuban society. The ÖKG is a non-profit organization and independent of the influence of any political parties, lobbies or institutions.

Main activities:

The ÖKG promotes better understanding for the objectives and achievements of the Cuban Revolution and Cuba's current situation by providing up-to-date information on these issues. Among other things, the publication of the journal "Cuba Sí" serves that purpose.

Besides journeys dedicated to specific projects, the ÖKG organizes so-called "brigades of solidarity" for people to voluntarily work in Cuba and get to know it at first hand.

The ÖKG supports different projects with donations and commodity contributions:

- we deliver the resources for a drug curing asthma to Cuba within the framework of mediCuba
- we provide medical equipment and spare parts that are not available due to the blockade to the hospital Miguel Enríquez in Havana
- we support two "círculos infantiles" (preschools) in the province of Santiago de Cuba
- we support a community developing project in San Antonio del Sur, Guantánamo.

Founding date: 2nd april 1969



Statement of the Austria-Cuba Association concerning the human rights situation in Cuba

Since the foundation of the ÖKG in 1969 our association closely monitors the political and social situation and the development of human rights in Cuba. We are able to ascertain that the process of revolutionary transformation goes hand in hand with the progress in social and civil rights. The Cuban Revolution laid the foundation for the unfolding of social, political and economic rights of the Cuban people.

Cuba not only acknowledges the International Bill of Human Rights (political/civil and social rights), but is one of the most progressive and successful countries in the world concerning social rights despite the inhuman and criminal blockade which is lasting now for 50 years. In its State of World Population 2011 the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) clearly stated that Cuba has the best human development indices among the Latin American countries. The advance of Cuba in this respect compared to other countries of Latin America and the Caribbean amounts to a quarter century.

The following factors are crucial for this situation: the low child mortality rate (4,8 per 1000 live births), the high life expectancy (men: 77 years, women: 81 years), the access to health care (91 percent) and education (100 percent), and the literacy rate (100 percent for both genders). All figures in these areas are equal or surpass the ones of industrialized countries. The comparison with the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, but also with countries like Austria or the USA corroborates the outstanding achievements of the Cuban way. The figures for the directly neighboring Cuba, like Haiti (life expectancy of men: 61 years) or the Dominican Republic (child mortality rate 31,9 per 1000 live births), show the great efforts made by Cuba for its people despite the decades of blockade and countless natural disasters.

The following human rights are fulfilled:

- the right to free and accessible education
- the right to free and accessible health
- the right to culture which is supported by the government with to a large extent free cultural activities

Concerning civil rights, the following can be stated:

The Cuban democracy does not correspond directly to the western multi-party system. It is shaped by special historical, economic and cultural conditions. After 500 years under colonial and imperialist rule the Cuban people developed their own democracy legitimated by free and secret elections.

It is not parties that contest in the periodical communal, regional and national elections in Cuba, but individuals supported by the people who believe them to be able to best represent the interests and needs of the different strata of society and different occupational groups. The political system of Cuba represents the model of "participatory democracy". The elections in Cuba are free, equal, secret and direct.



In Cuba suffrage is a right, not a legal obligation for the violation of which one could be prosecuted. Individuals are directly nominated and equally presented without canvassing. They have to secure more than 50 percent of the popular vote to get elected. All strata of society are represented in the Cuban parliament. The representatives at all levels have to answer to their electorate on a regular basis.

The Cuban government conforms to international law and provides extensive civil and political rights to the Cuban people. These rights among others are the right to life, freedom of religion, personal freedom, inviolability of the person and personal integrity. It is stated by Article 3 of the Cuban constitution that all government agencies are required to establish a contact office for the needs of the people. The office of the attorney-general in Cuba has a special department responsible for the protection of civil rights. Article 53 of the Cuban constitution grants the freedom of speech and the freedom of press. The press, radio and television stations are owned by the public and are accessible to all people.

Even though the capital punishment is part of the Cuban national law it is only practiced in very exceptional cases. Since the year 2000 there was only one case of death penalty (2003). In May 2008 all death sentences were commuted to life imprisonment.

It is also important to note that Cuba does not only protect the human rights of its own people, but also developed and still is developing close ties of friendship and solidarity with countless nations in the world. Thousands of Cuban physicians and teachers are stationed outside their country providing humanitarian aid. While other countries are sending soldiers to wage war, Cuba sends its doctors to relieve humanitarian catastrophes. Revolutionary Cuba thus not only respects the right to life of its own people, but also protects human life outside of its territory.

Another aspect connected with human rights concerns Cuba's handling of natural resources and the environment. For many years Cuba has promoted a sustainable approach to natural resources and the environment on a national and international level and has campaigned for the human right of life in a healthy environment and the preservation of the ecosystem for future generations.

In conclusion, it is possible to state that Cuba – contrary to the countless smear campaigns – assigns utmost value to the protection of human rights. In this respect it can be seen as a model for other nations.