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To
OHCHR Secretariat
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UPR Submission – Cuba – Session 22 April – 3 May 2013
from the Swedish-Cuban Association

The Swedish-Cuban Association was founded the 24th of November 1966 and has today over 1 500 members and many branches around the country. During October the Swedish-Cuban Association will be having public lectures and seminars in 24 of Sweden's largest cities. The Swedish-Cuban Association is a registered Swedish non-profit NGO which works to develop friendship between the peoples of Sweden and Cuba. In these efforts we produce books and other information materials about Cuba and spread knowledge about Cuba. We organize study visits to the island, invite guests to Sweden from Cuba, organize Cuba-inspired cultural events etc. During the years, members of our association have amassed considerable knowledge about Cuba as reflected in the quarterly Swedish magazine Cuba. The Swedish-Cuban Association has broad cooperation within our country and also many international contacts.

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(1)

During its 45 years of friendship contact with Cuba the Swedish-Cuban Association is very happy about the continuous positive development of human rights in all its fields, in spite of the US Government animosity, especially the US blockade which has, as documented in UN reports, harmed Cuba's economy and also hindered Cuba importing such goods as cancer treatment medicines for children, thus creating difficulties for the human rights of those to best possible health. In spite of these efforts of the US Government to hamper Cuba's development, Cuba has put human rights in the forefront and given priority to the needs of children, the aged and women.

(2)

Since the first Cuba UPR 2008-2009 very many members of our Association have visited Cuba, some on a yearly basis, and many on special study trips, studying such achievements in Cuba as health care, education etc. Generally speaking we are very happy observing how well Cuba is progressing developing its economy, a development that is directed towards giving positive results for the continued advancement of human rights in all fields.

(3)

We note that since the 2008-2009 UPR, within Cuba there have taken place intensive discussions amongst the Cuban people, with the extensive involvement of peoples organisations such as trade unions, women's organisations, student organisations, residential area organisations etc. A wide scale of questions concerning economic, political and social life in Cuba was scrutinized. 7-8 million Cubans participated in the over 160 000 discussion meetings during the Winter 2010-11 which resulted in a broad scale of proposals and amendments. The people's discussions at grass-roots level have been steadily developed in Cuba, ever since the constitution commission's constitution proposal was scrutinized in this manner 1975. This development of grass-roots involvement is an important ingredient of democracy, which we observe has been further strengthened since the previous UPR.

(4)

Cuba's welfare system with free healthcare and education for all is one of the most admired results of the Cuban revolution 1959, a revolution which gave the people as a whole a say in the development path for Cuba. Such welfare results in a third world country would hardly be possible without strong peoples influence in the politics of the country, i.e. democracy in the basic sense of the word; Peoples Power. In Cuba Citizens have the right to vote from the age of 16, which underlines society's attitude towards young people. To be able to exercise democracy, defence of the nation's sovereignty against superpower interventionist take-over efforts is necessary, and Cuba has developed an election system which counteracts superpower infiltration, and in Cuba there is no money in the elections. Defence of sovereignty is a prerequisite for democracy. Municipal elections are taking place in Cuba in October and a few months afterwards delegates for the provincial assemblies and the national Parliament will be elected. Each people has the right to choose its own system, and judging by the Cuban peoples involvement and the practical welfare and cultural results Cuba's system provides much democracy.

(5)

In Sweden we are proud of the place women have achieved in society, for instance almost half of the seats of the Swedish parliament are held by women, 44,7 percent, fourth best in the world. However, Cuba is in third place with 45,2 percent. Considering Cuba is a Latin American country with their machismo history, the progress of women in Cuba society is a great source of inspiration and much can be learnt from Cuba in this field of human rights. Both concerning political influence and professional achievements Cuban women have achieved much and are continuing together with the men to take strides ahead.

(6)

Cuba's Constitution provides the base of Cuba's active policy against all forms of discrimination. Our members when visiting Cuba make note of how well integrated Cuba's Citizens are. During the most recent years we have witnessed activity and events directed against prejudices concerning gender identity and sexual orientation and for the promotion of self-esteem. Cuba's policy of non-discrimination and equality and its results in Cuban society are an example stimulating efforts outside Cuba's borders in many countries.

(7)

We note that the structure of the Cuban legal system and the way its functionaries are appointed is quite similar to the Swedish system with both professional judges and layperson judges, and also the right for accused to choose their lawyers, and if they do not the state provides a defence lawyer. Members of our association have noted the similarities and also been present in trials. The whole Cuban law is published by Cuba on the Internet. We have published a Swedish translation of the Cuban Constitution, so it has been possible for our members to compare the written word with the progress attained in practice in Cuba, and after visiting Cuba we hear from our members many positive words.

(8)

Lastly we wish to point at the enormous contributions Cuba makes to the Right to Life, Health, Education and Food for poorer sectors of society in other third world countries. Tens of thousands of Cuban doctors and teachers etc are involved. Tens of thousands of youth from other third world countries have become doctors and teachers thanks to Cuba's Solidarity. Good health, the ability to read and write and knowledge, are of course vital for the development of democracy. Cuba's contribution to human rights extends far distances outside Cuba's own borders.

For the Swedish—Cuban Association
6th October 2012

Martin Österlin, Association President