

ST.VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES/CUBA FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY

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SVG/CUBA FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY

The SVG/CUBA Friendship Society is one of the oldest of its type in the Caribbean, dating its formation on July, 26, 1976. It was formed with the expressed objective of promoting friendship and solidarity between the peoples of Cuba and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Since its inception, the SVGCFS has, in spite of the difficulties encountered in free exchanges with Cuba, on account of the blockade imposed by the USA and facilitated by the Organisation of American States (OAS) ,continued to promote cooperation between the peoples of the two respective countries. It was instrumental in facilitating people-to-people exchanges and in paving the way for the first group of Vincentian students to receive free tertiary training in Cuba, beginning in 1980.

The Friendship Society also facilitated the provision of Cuban relief assistance to St. Vincent and the Grenadines following the destruction wrought by the eruption of the Soufriere volcano in 1979. Cooperation in the fields of health, education, sports, culture and agriculture between Cuba and St. Vincent and the Grenadines can also be attributed to the solidarity activities of the SVGCFS.

The SVGCFS is not officially registered with the Un ECOSOC.

I - INTRODUCTION

1. The Cuban Revolution of 1959 opened a new chapter in the history of the Cuban people as regards the enjoyment of fundamental rights. The Cuban Revolution has not only permitted the exercise of sovereignty by a people long subjected to foreign domination but also placed the issues of economic and social rights firmly on the national agenda.

2. Yet the full enjoyment of these rights to national self-determination is challenged by the imposition of a half-century long economic, financial and commercial blockade which places restrictions on the ability of the Cuban people to determine their own path to socio-economic development. In addition, grievous acts of terrorism, often with deadly consequences, and including foreign-inspired invasion and assassination attempts on the lives of Cuban leaders, have severely compromised normal economic and social development.

II - CONTENT

3. The Cuban Constitution clearly states the commitment to the fundamental principles of basic human rights and freedoms and Cuba is a party to the relevant international Conventions governing those rights.

4. In addition to pursuing the enjoyments of the rights of its own people, Cuba, has, under the period of review, continued to play its part in ensuring that the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines can enjoy those rights too. Cuba has granted scholarships to 18 more Vincentian students during the period, thereby contributing to the human resource pool of a tiny, underdeveloped country which does not possess a university of its own. In total, Cuba has provided 353 scholarships to young Vincentians since 1980.

5. Cuba has provided assistance in the health and cultural fields. By far its biggest contribution towards Vincentian socio-economic development has been the selfless assistance, at great sacrifice, to permit our country, without an international airport, to build one such, propelling the economic development of our country.

6. In spite of the difficulties encountered, Cuba continues to try and provide basic access for its citizens to the fundamental requirements of life. It cooperates with international agencies and other states in guaranteeing such rights and freedoms.

III - CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7. In order for Cuba to be better able to meet the needs of its citizens and to provide for the unfettered enjoyment of their rights, it is essential that it be permitted the same rights as every other country in the hemisphere.

8. This means the lifting of the unjust blockade, ceasing all acts of aggression (political, economic), an end to support for terrorists acts against the Cuban state and people, the repeal of the pernicious Helms-Burton and Torricelli Acts, and the cessation of the media campaign of disinformation against Cuba.

9. The St. Vincent and the Grenadines/Cuba Friendship Society supports this basic call and reiterate our solidarity with the sister people of Cuba.

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