

The Brazilian Center for Solidarity with the Peoples and Struggle for Peace (CEBRAPAZ) was established in Brazil on the 10th of December, 2004, as a non-partisan, diverse, independent, not-for-profit, civil society organization. It mobilizes members of the Brazilian civil society in defense of peace, the nations' sovereignty and the promotion of human rights, struggling against exploitation, war, imperialism and colonialism, and based on a core value, that of solidarity among the peoples. It is a member of the World Peace Council (www.wpc-in.org), which was established in 1949-1950 and has consultative status with ECOSOC.

1. The Brazilian Center for Solidarity with the Peoples and Struggle for Peace (CEBRAPAZ) takes the welcomed opportunity to contribute with the Republic of Cuba's Universal Periodic Review (UPR), considering itself acquainted with the situation in the country and in close contact with the Cuban people. CEBRAPAZ has visited Cuba numerous times each year, having the opportunity to know in depth the local reality, from the cities to the countryside. There, we have witnessed Cuba's efforts to achieve the fullest enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all its citizens. We would like to emphasize on some of the country's achievements, referring to the recommendations made during the UPR second cycle, in 2013.¹
2. We have observed the evolution in Cuba's legal and institutional framework, which are improving in order to update the country's economic and social model, based on the commitment to strengthening social justice and solidarity as delineated in the plan for Economic and Social Policies for the 2016-2021 period.² This legislative update has been reflected in new or renewed rules regarding the leasing of land,³ social security, employment, housing and self-employment, the migration policy, among other areas, as described in the plan.
3. All Cubans, without discrimination, have access to the provision of basic quality services such as education, health care, social security and welfare, and all updates are conducted in the effort to assure the continuity and improvement of this reality, as recommended by the Islamic Republic of Iran, Serbia, Uzbekistan, Algeria, Turkmenistan, and others.⁴
4. A necessary condition for effective political and social participation, the Cubans' high level of education and political knowledge is impressive. They are well aware of the legal framework that establishes their fundamental rights, duties and guarantees as citizens, as well as the basis for their respect, realization and protection. Cubans are very well informed not only about domestic politics but on international issues, which they discuss with solid arguments, freely and unafraid to express critical opinions about local matters. We have witnessed how freedom of opinion and expression are respected in Cuba, which includes the wide existence of different religions, churches and beliefs

1 OHCHR (1 May 2013) Universal Periodic Review of Cuba – Second Cycle, www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/CUIIndex.aspx (accessed 3 October 2017).
2 Republic of Cuba's Ministry of Finances and Prices, *Lineamientos para el Período 2016-2021*, <http://www.mfp.cu/ficheros/Lineamientos%202016-2021.rar> (accessed 2 October 2017)
3 Republic of Cuba's Ministry of Agriculture, *Analizan impacto de la entrega de tierras en usufructo y nuevas acciones a ejecutar*, <http://www.minag.gob.cu/node/280> (accessed 2 October 2017)
4 A/HRC/24/16/Add.1 - Para. 7

that are respected without discrimination.

5. Social use of Information and Communication Technologies, including the Internet, is also improving, and we have witnessed an overwhelming expansion over the years. This change goes from the smallest town to the urban centers. Inclusion should be taken into account, as older generations tend to be left behind in this process.

6. Cuba's democratic system is often misunderstood as it differs from representative democracy regimes. The apparatus of the Cuban State is made up of legislative, executive, administrative, judicial, fiscal, control and defense organs, each of which performs a specific function in the power apparatus. In spite of the misinformation that the international media provide, elections occur periodically, as scheduled, with high levels of participation, even when the vote is not mandatory and there are no political campaigns. Candidates must be known and appreciated by their neighbors, which is why some people do not make it into the system: because they never manage to gather enough quorum to be elected. This principle is materialized through the direct participation of the people in the exercise and active control of the organs of power, even through their political and civil institutions, and within the existing legal framework, which includes the possibility of revocation of the mandate, for most positions.⁵

7. Political participation occurs on both daily and local issues, as well as on political processes with greater scope, such as elections, popular consultations, among others. Recently, the proposals of the Conceptualization of the Cuban economic and social model and the Bases of the National Development Plan until 2030⁶ were discussed by 1.6 million Cubans (in over 47,000 meetings), from which over 200,000 proposals emerged, aimed at ensuring a more just, free, independent, equitable, democratic, collaborative and participatory society.⁷

8. Beyond caring for its own citizens' human rights, Cuba extends its solidarity to other countries. This is the case of our country, Brazil, where thousands of Cuban doctors are working in numerous municipalities, providing medical care in previously unattended communities, either in the peripheries of metropolitan areas or in more remote regions. As recently noted by Ms. Virginia Dandan, the UN Human Rights Council-appointed Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity, whereas universal education is a pillar of the country's development, an

5 Republic of Cuba, *Electoral Law*, <http://www.acn.cu/images/2017/septiembre/LEY%20ELECTORAL.pdf> (accessed 2 October 2017)

6 *Conceptualización del Modelo Económico y Social Cubano de Desarrollo Socialista*, <http://media.cubadebate.cu/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/PDF-510-kb.pdf> (accessed 2 October 2017).

7 Cuba Debate (30 May 2017) *Cuba: Ruta democrática y participativa para aprobar documentos definitorios en la vida nacional*, <http://www.cubadebate.cu/especiales/2017/05/30/ruta-democratica-y-participativa/> (accessed 2 October 2017); Prensa Latina (19 May 2017) *Aprueban documentos de actualización de modelo económico cubano*, <http://prensa-latina.cu/index.php?o=rn&id=86984&SEO=aprueban-documentos-de-actualizacion-de-modelo-economico-cubano> (accessed 3 October 2017).

important value of the Cuban educational system is international collaboration, upon which the country sustains partnerships with over 30 countries.⁸

9. In line with recommendations made by the Russian Federation, Sierra Leone, Timor-Leste and Bangladesh, in 2013,⁹ Cuba sends the most needed help in events of epidemics and natural disasters, such as to counter Ebola in Africa, or the most recent assistance sent to Haiti, Dominica and other Caribbean countries affected by hurricanes. According to Ms. Dandan, “these emergency teams have attended to the needs and care of more than 3.5 million people in 21 countries”. Besides that, in line with recommendations from Tajikistan, The United Republic of Tanzania, and others,¹⁰ Cuba continues to host thousands of students from every corner of the world for higher studies that they would probably not get in their home countries or the regions they live in, often but not only those affected by conflict. One example is the Latin-American School of Medicine (ELAM) established by Cuba for the training of 10,000 medical doctors from all over the region,¹¹ including from the United States. Cuba has also cooperated with other nations with its pedagogical method, in a struggle to eliminate illiteracy, in line with recommendations from Chad, Haiti and the Russian Federation.¹²

10. We must stress that all these domestic and outward concerns for human rights and solidarity are met even though Cuba manages to survive 55 years of an US-imposed blockade, which constitutes a serious violation of the Cubans’ human rights and a grave breach of the country’s sovereignty, while considerably hampering its development and working for its people’s isolation.

11. The fact that concern for and hard work toward the realization of the Cuban people’s social, cultural, economic, civil and political rights are conducted with firm commitment even under these circumstances is verifiable by anyone who visits the country and meets its people, and meet the recommendations made by India, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and Zimbabwe.¹³ For peoples in countries affected by the economic crisis, in which poverty, unemployment and even hunger are rampant, Cuba’s commitments are exemplary and have been developed through legal updates, in line with recommendations made by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Bhutan, the People's Republic of China, and others.¹⁴

12. Cuba’s active work for world and regional peace are also verifiable, for instance, with the successful hosting of the peace talks between the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary

8 OHCHR (19 July 2017), *UN rights expert compliments Cuba’s international solidarity, prods rights progress*, www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21893&LangID=E (accessed 3 Oct. 2017)

9 A/HRC/24/16/Add.1 - Para. 7

10 A/HRC/24/16/Add.1 - Para. 7

11 Escuela Latino-americana de Medicina, *Misión*, <http://instituciones.sld.cu/elam/mision/> (accessed 2 October 2017).

12 A/HRC/24/16/Add.1 - Para. 7

13 A/HRC/24/16/Add.1 - Para. 7

14 A/HRC/24/16/Add.1 - Para. 7

Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), contributing for the transformation of a conflict over five decades old and which gravely affected the Colombian people and destabilized the entire region. Moreover, through civil society organizations such as the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP) and the Cuban Movement for Peace and for the Peoples' Sovereignty (MovPaz), solidarity between the Cubans and other peoples is strong.

13. Cubans have taken active part in a global struggle for peace, against weapons of mass destruction, the militarization of the planet, colonialism and wars, striving for a more equitable international order. For instance, over the last years, peace organizations from all over the world have gathered in Guantánamo, Cuba, to discuss and protest the existence of over 1,000 military bases scattered around the world, the majority of them by the US – which includes the US naval base installed in Guantánamo against the Cubans' will, and where the US keeps an obscure prison outside international law that continues to shame humanity with gross violations of human rights and the International Humanitarian Law. CEBRAPAZ has participated in these events organized by MovPaz and the World Peace Council – of which our organizations are members.

14. Cuba takes a prominent role in regional projects for an integration based on solidarity, cooperation and respect for each nation's sovereignty, such as in the case of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), and promotes a close relationship with other regional initiatives such as the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR). CELAC, which is composed of 33 countries, has adopted an ambitious commitment and proclamation during the 2014 Summit in Cuba, which was actively promoted by the Cuban leadership, declaring the region a Zone of Peace. The declaration included the respect for the region's diversity and the commitment with unity for the promotion of common progress in the struggle against poverty and social injustice, as well as the firm commitment with global disarmament and the end of the planet's militarization, a commitment based in the historic establishment of a nuclear-free zone in Latin America and the Caribbean by the 1967 Treaty of Tlatelolco and that is exemplary, as noted by the OHCHR Independent Expert on the Promotion of a Democratic and Equitable International Order, Alfred Maurice de Zayas.¹⁵

15. Therefore, we continue to observe how Cuba strives to strengthen its democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms while promoting the advancement of social, economic, political, cultural, national and sovereign projects through the population's active participation. In its firm commitment and engagement with international institutions that have to be strengthened to further the peoples' fundamental rights, such as the UN Human Rights Council and so many others, Cuba contributes to a global dialogue and takes positive notes of its peers' recommendations, as showed in previous UPR cycles, while struggling against the grave effects of the US blockade and

15 OHCHR (3 Feb. 2014) *CELAC / Zone of Peace: "A key step to countering the globalization of militarism"* – UN Expert, www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=14215& (accessed 2 Oct. 2017)



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interventionist campaign, working hard for a regional integration based on cooperation, for international solidarity and peace.