

From:

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To

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UPR Submission – Cuba – 30th session May 2018

Full report incl., cover page, from the Swedish-Cuban Association

The Swedish-Cuban Association, founded November 24th, 1966, is a registered Swedish non-profit NGO that works to develop friendship between the peoples of Sweden and Cuba. The Association celebrated its 50th Anniversary in November last year 2016. On that occasion we hosted an international conference with representatives of sister organisations from Europe and also Cuba, USA and Canada. Representatives from over 30 countries participated. Here in Sweden we have branches in nine of our larger cities and groups and contact persons in several more. A vital part of our work is to organize public lectures and seminars to help people form a fact-based view and understanding of Cuba. To support this 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 Kuba that our Association publishes. The Swedish-Cuban Association has broad cooperation within our country and also many international contacts.

UPR Submission – Cuba – 30th session May 2018

From the Swedish-Cuban Association, www.svensk-kubanska.se, info@svensk-kubanska.se

(1)

During its 50 years of friendship contact with Cuba the Swedish-Cuban Association is very happy about the continuous positive development of human rights in all fields, in spite of the US Government animosity, especially the criminal 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. The small but important steps to ease the blockade made by President Barack Obama and the development of official and other contacts between the two countries, are now threatened by the present U.S. leaders in the White House. In spite of the US Government's efforts to hamper Cuba's economy and development, Cuba has put human rights in the forefront and continued to give priority to the needs of children, the aged and women.

(2)

Since the previous Cuba UPR 2012-2013 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, the participatory democracy of Cuba, environmental work for a sustainable future, etc. These studies have been documented and presented in books, magazine articles, lectures etc. Generally speaking we are very happy observing how well Cuba is progressing developing its society and welfare, a development that is directed towards giving continued positive results for the continued advancement of human rights in all fields.

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We note that since the 2012-2013 UPR, within Cuba the intensive discussions organised amongst the Cuban people and their civil society organisations about how to update the economy and social organization of society have continued. There have been tens of thousands of meetings involving trade unions, women's organisations, student organisations, residential area organisations etc. Over 200,000 proposals were put forward and used in the modification of the policy proposals which were in June this year 2017 submitted to Cuba's Parliament for consideration and approved by Parliament. The people's discussions at grass-roots level have been steadily developed in Cuba, ever since the constitution commission's proposal was scrutinized in this manner 1975. This development of grass-roots involvement is a vital ingredient of Cuba's democracy, which we observe has been further developed and strengthened since the previous UPR.

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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 popular 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 confidence in and 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 that counteracts superpower infiltration. In Cuba there is no money in the elections. Defence of sovereignty is a prerequisite for democracy. Municipal elections are taking place in Cuba this fall, postponed a month until November because of the damage created by hurricane Irma. A few months later delegates for the provincial assemblies and the national Parliament will be elected. Each country's 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 in the true meaning of the word.

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The People of Cuba have formed their democracy taking into account Cuba's history of struggle for sovereignty, first freeing itself from Spain's colonialism and then from U.S. dominance. The U.S. has today an open policy of regime change against Cuba as laid out in the U.S. so-called Helms-Burton law. The U.S. Government has millions of dollars in its budget to finance individuals and groups who could be tools in U.S. ambitions to subvert Cuba. Cuba has an electoral system in which individual candidates are chosen at open grassroots meetings in the residential neighbourhoods. The People choose between these candidates in their district when voting in a secret ballot election for the Municipal Assemblies. The Communist Party of Cuba is by law not allowed to participate. When the Municipal Assemblies have been elected, the next step commences. Electoral commissions consisting of Civil Society organisations such as the trade unions, the women's organisation, student organisations, residential organisations, hold numerous meetings in their area to make a proposal of candidates for the National Parliament and the Provincial Assemblies. An important goal is to ensure that different sectors of the population are represented in the proposal. This proposal is then presented to the Municipal Assembly. After discussions and adjustments, the Municipal Assembly makes a decision about which candidates that shall represent the municipality in Parliament and in their Provincial Assembly. This is an indirect election. To be doubly sure that the list of candidates has the support of the population, secret ballot elections are held in which the electorate can strike out candidates that do not have their approval,

or say yes to all candidates. We note that the Cuban electoral system gives much opportunity for the citizens to influence decisions, and that the absence of political parties makes it difficult for foreign powers to meddle in the elections.

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In Sweden we are proud of the place women have achieved in our society, for instance almost half of the seats of the Swedish parliament are held by women, 43.6 percent, sixth best in the world. However, Cuba is in third place with 48.9 percent. It was 45.2 percent at the previous UPR 2012. In general women in Cuba have made great advances and the efforts in that direction continue. For instance 60 percent of all medical doctors are women, 71 percent of all judges and attorneys are women. In the Provincial Assemblies women delegates comprise 50.5 percent. Women delegates in the Municipal Assemblies have since 1976, when the new constitution was agreed upon through a referendum, increased from 8% to 33.6% today. Considering Cuba is a Latin American country with their machismo history, with that culture's stereotypes and prejudices, the progress of women in Cuban 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.

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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 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.

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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 the accused to choose their lawyers, and if they do not do so then the state provides a defence lawyer. Members of our association have noted the similarities. One of our law professional members has been present as an observer during a Cuban trial. For all who are interested, the whole Cuban law is published by Cuba on the Internet (www.gacetaoficial.gob.cu). We have published a Swedish translation of the Cuban Constitution, so it has been easy 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.

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Through its planned and consistent care of the environment, be it ecological food production in city garden collectives, forestry development, recycling in residential areas, speaking out in international fora etc, Cuba participates with those in the forefront against climate change, thus taking its responsibility for those nations that are already today seriously affected by climate change and how it undermines the human rights of those hit by floods, storms, landslides etc, catastrophes that the poorest around the world have the most difficulty to protect themselves against.

The World Wildlife Fund, WWF, reported in 2006 that Cuba is the only country in the world with an ecological footprint and at the same time a high Human Development Index, i.e. sustainable development.

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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. Over fifty thousands Cuban doctors and teachers etc are involved in these countries. When catastrophes occur Cuba offers to help. Cuba sent over 400 medical doctors and other specialists to the Ebola emergency in Western Africa. Cuba was in September this year enormously damaged by the hurricane Irma and has much to do at home, but in solidarity Cuba immediately sent 750 doctors and other specialists to help those Caribbean island nations that were ravaged by the storm. When an earthquake hit Mexico now in September, Cuba immediately sent 40 doctors and other specialists. Cuba, itself a relatively poor third world country, subjected to the U.S. economic war, the blockade, also aids other third world countries train their youth. Tens of thousands of youth from such countries have become doctors and teachers thanks to Cuba's solidarity. More than ten million people in over 30 countries have learnt to read and write thanks to Cuba's literacy programs. 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
3rd October 2017

Zoltan Tiroler, Association President