

June 16, 2020



Dear Chancellor Angela Merkel,  
dear Foreign Minister Heiko Maas,  
dear President Charles Michel,  
dear Chairperson Gordan Grlić Radman,  
dear High Representative Josep Borrell Fontelles,  
dear Secretary General Jeppe Tranholm-Mikkelsen,  
dear President Ursula von der Leyen,

We are writing to urge the European Union to continue its welcome policy of developing positive and strong relationships with Cuba based on mutual respect and understanding.

The last three years have seen a significant negative change in the attitude of the United States government towards Cuba which has included the reduction of diplomatic relations, communications and overall relations between the two countries. Recently even the inclusion of Cuba in the State Department's list of countries that allegedly do not fully cooperate with US efforts against terrorism. At the same time we have seen the US increase its use of extraterritorial laws through the application of Titles III and IV of the Helms-Burton legislation which negatively affects hundreds of businesses, banks and even NGOs in European countries and across the globe. This kind of “policy of fear” is undermining free and fair trade, is violating international law, and is destroying solidarity and peace.

In November 2019, for the 28th consecutive year, the United Nations General Assembly voted 187-2-3, in support of a resolution calling for an end of the U.S. blockade on Cuba. At the same time there have been visits to Cuba by a number of leading European political figures and reciprocal visits by leading Cuban political personalities to Europe. These developments are to be welcomed. The European Union has the right and the capacity to play an independent role in encouraging the practical implementation of the will and desire of the peoples of Europe, and to strengthen multilateralism.

Again, there has been welcome progress in the relationships between the EU and Cuba through the signing of the Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement in March 2016. We hope that this agreement will be filled with progressive activities and sustainable projects.

There are now very valuable preconditions laid out for Germany's Presidency of the Council of the European Union between 1 July – 31 December 2020. The focus will of course be combating the Corona Pandemic and its enormous negative effects for our societies and that of other countries, too. This important intention can and should be utilised for strengthening

and improving the relations between the EU and Cuba in the field of health and medical research and services. Cuba is leading that development in many ways, for instance through its pharmaceutical research, its holistic and inclusive health system, and its medical internationalism. Cuba has sent the Henry Reeve Brigades to more than 20 countries, saving many lives and reducing suffering of patients. Cuba has sent brigades to European countries such as Italy and Andorra.

With these activities Cuba helps to strengthen multilateralism and solidarity, and even the rule of law internationally. Therefore, it is a scandal and a shame, that at the very same time it has had to deal with increased unilateral sanctions and subversion by the Trump Administration and its agencies, which even blocked medical supplies from reaching Cuba.

Another important goal in the new Presidency is to combat climate change and to advancing global climate action under the Paris Agreement. In this regard Cuba is very advanced and continues to make efforts to develop a 'sustainable and green' economy. All its efforts over recent decades illustrate an amazingly ambitious and progressive strategic program for a systemic policy of climate protection. Cuba's national climate plan "Tarea Vida" (Program for Life) began in July 2017 and is being implemented across Cuba at every level.

In our view, it would be decisive for the development of better relations between the EU and Cuba for the European Union to have a clear and unequivocal stance against the punitive and indefensible policies embodied in the unilateral U.S. anti Cuban Blockade legislation.

The stance of the EU should include a clear statement informing the US administration of the EU's intentions to strongly support the rights of the member states to trade with Cuba without the threat of fines being imposed by the US Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC). Further, we believe that the EU should clearly endorse the right to trade with Cuba and the refusal of any EU companies to pay any fines which OFAC might seek to impose on them for trading with Cuba. Such actions would help to implement "Council Regulation (EC) No 2271/96 of 22 November 1996". In this regard, the European Commission should call upon the World Trade Organisation to indict the U.S. government for its violations of international trade laws and principles. With such action the EU would support many other countries, companies and organisations, in their perfectly legal desire to do business with Cuba.

We also believe that it is of utmost importance, that the EU strengthens the rule of law in international relations. Therefore, it should recognise the independence and sovereignty of Cuba by declaring its full support for the complete and unconditional withdrawal by the United States of America and its military from its illegal occupation of Guantanamo Bay. The EU should support Cuba's rights and demand for full restoration of the land to Cuba and adequate compensation for the many decades of occupation.

We are a broad and diverse group of organisations based in Europe working to develop friendship and solidarity between Cuba and our respective countries, as well as with the European Union itself. It is our view that the European Union has an important role to play in developing positive relations with Cuba based on mutual respect and understanding between sovereign nations, and we hope that your Presidency will see these policies developed further,

Sincerely yours,

**The undersigned from 21 countries/entities are listed on the next page**



## **The undersigned**

*(members and non-members of the EU)*

- AUSTRIA: Michael Wögerer (President), Österreichisch-Kubanische Gesellschaft and Prof. Alfred Kohlbacher (President of the Board of Trustees)
- BELGIUM: Wim Leysens (Secretary), Coordinación para el levantamiento del bloqueo contra Cuba (40 member groups); Isabelle Vanbrabant (President), Cubanismo.be
- BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: Sead Halilovic (President), Association of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian-Cuban Friendship
- DENMARK: Sven-Erik Simonsen (President), Dansk-Cubansk Forening
- DONETSK: Stanislav Retinskiy (President) Association "Donbass - Cuba"
- EUROPE: Franco Cavalli (Presidente), mediCuba – Europa
- FINLAND: Paula Pere (President), Suomi-Kuuba-seura ry (Asociación de Amistad Finlandia-Cuba)
- GERMANY: Angelika Becker (President), Netzwerk Cuba e.V. (41 member groups)
- GREECE: Ioannis Tsalavoutas (Cordinador), La Red Solidaria Griega; Andreas Chaicalis (President) - Greek Cuban Association "Venceremos" of Kalamata; Alekos Chalvatzis (Coordinator), "Jose Marti" Cultural Association (Greece) - Solidarity with Cuba
- ICELAND: Sigurlaug Gunnlaugsdottir (President), Vináttufélag Islands og Kúbu (VIK) (Iceland-Cuba Friendship Association)
- IRELAND: Simon McGuinness (National Coordinator), Cuba Support Group
- ITALY: Irma Dioli (President), Associazione Nazionale di Amicizia Italia-Cuba
- LUXEMBURG: Joël Wunsch (President), Amistad Luxemburgo-Cuba
- NORWAY: Cihan Karakoc (president) Norwegian-Cuba association
- SERBIA: Sveto Dobrijević (President), Serbian-Cuban Friendship Association
- SLOVENIA: Igor JURIŠIČ (President) Slovene - Cuban friendship association
- SPAIN: Yolanda García Bravo (Presidenta), Asociación de Amistad Hispano Cubana Bartolomé de Las Casas (España)
- SWEDEN: Zoltan Tiroler (President), Swedish-Cuban Association
- SWITZERLAND: Samuel Wanitsch, Asociation Switzerland-Cuba
- TURKEY: Yigit Gunay (President), José Martí Küba Dostluk Derneği (JMKDD) (Asociación José Martí de Amistad Cuba-Turquía)
- UNITED KINGDOM: Rob Miller (Director) and Bernard Regan (Secretary), Cuba Solidarity Campaign