

December 16, 2021



Dear President Emmanuel Jean-Michel Frédéric Macron,
dear President Charles Michel,
dear High Representative Josep Borrell Fontelles,
dear Secretary General Jeppe Tranholm-Mikkelsen,
dear President Ursula von der Leyen,

We are writing to urge you and the European Union to continue its welcome policy of developing positive and strong relationships with Cuba based on mutual respect and understanding. We would like to take the International Day for Human Rights as an opportunity to commemorate that the U.S. blockade against Cuba is violating basic human rights of more than 11 million Cubans – and this has to be stopped. And we hope that during your upcoming Presidency the relations of the EU towards Cuba will strongly improve.

The last five 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. At the same time we have seen the US increase its application 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. At the same time, the U.S. government is financing and otherwise supporting groups in Cuba to fight their government, staging subversive and destructive activities. This kind of “policy of fear” is undermining free and fair trade, and is violating international law, destroying solidarity and peace.

In June 23 of this year, for the 29th consecutive year, the United Nations General Assembly voted 184-2, in support of a resolution calling for an end of the U.S. blockade on Cuba. At the same time there have been recent visits to Cuba by a number of leading

European political figures and in turn there have been 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 despite staging and manipulations by a group of rightwing populists.

There are now very valuable preconditions laid out for France's Presidency of the Council of the European Union 1 January – 30 June 2022.

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 anti Cuban Blockade legislation. This stance of the EU should include a clear statement informing the US administration of the EUs 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 very broad and diverse group of citizens 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 develop these policies further,

Sincerely yours,

The undersigned 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 por el levantamiento del bloqueo contra Cuba (40 member groups); *Isabelle Vanbrabant* (President), Cubanismo.be
- BULGARIA: Association of Friendship "Bulgaria-Cuba"
- DANSK: *Sven-Erik Simonsen* (President), Association Denmark – Cuba
- DONETSK: *Stanislav Retinskiy* (President) Association "Donbass - Cuba"
- FRANCE: *Charly Bouhana* (Président) & *Michel Taupin* (Communication) Association Cuba Si France; *Victor Fernandez Envoyé* (Président) Cuba Coopération France; *Fabrice Leclerc* (General Secretary) Association France-Cuba
- GERMANY: *Angelika Becker* (President), Netzwerk Cuba e.V. (40 member groups and organisations)
- GREECE: *Loukia Konstantinou* (Coordinator) Asociación Cultural José Martí-Solidaridad con Cuba; *Andreas Chaicalis* (President), Greek Cuban Association "Venceremos" of Kalamata; *Kostas Isichos* (Coordinator), Red en la Defensa de la Humanidad – Capitulo griego; *Yannis Tsalavoutas* (Coordinator), La Red Solid@ria Griega (Bloggers)
- ITALIA: *Marco Papacci* (President), Associazione Nazionale di Amicizia Italia-Cuba
- IRELAND: *Simon McGuinness* (National Coordinator), Cuba Support Group
- NORWAY: *Cihan Karakoc* (president) Norwegian-Cuba association
- PORTUGAL: *Augusto Fidalgo*, Presidente, Associação de Amizade Portugal-Cuba.
- SLOVENIA: *Igor JURISČIČ* (President) Slovene - Cuban friendship association
- SWEDEN: *Zoltan Tiroler* (President), Swedish-Cuban Association
- SWITZERLAND: *Samuel Wanitsch*, Association Switzerland-Cuba
- TURKEY: *Nahide Özken* (President), Cuba-Turkey Friendship Association "José Martí"
- UNITED KINGDOM: *Rob Miller* (Director) and *Bernard Regan* (Secretary) Cuba Solidarity Campaign