

Cross Party Group on Cuba
9th May 2012
Committee Room 6

1. Elaine Smith MSP welcomed everyone and special guests;

Cuban Ambassador, Esther Armenteros Cardenas
Miami Five Family Members; Antionio Guerrero Carbrera and Rose Aurora Freijanes Coca, and Mr John McAllion, former MSP, who set up the Cross Party Group in 1999

2. ATTENDEES

Elaine Smith MSP	Sandra White MSP
Neil Findlay MSP	Hugh Henry MSP
Lesley Dobbin	Drew Smith MSP
Kath Campbell	Bridget Bevan
Ian Parsons	Carol Regan
Jan Pietrasik	Ronnie Moran
Tommy Kane	Dodi Weppler
Pauline Byrne	John McAllion
Sue McAllion	Vann Smith
Sue Barnaid	Lindsey Stewart
Pauline Boyle	John Quinn
Stewart Hyslop	Adrienne Chalmers
Paul Shaw	Hernando Fernandez
Vicky Grandon	Gloria Fernandez
Rena Matthew	Margaret McGregor
Dorothy Sharkey	Kath Bateman
David Russell	Valentina Montoya
Joan Cutting	Helen Kane
Billy Kane	Ray Newton

APOLOGIES

Murdo Fraser MSP, Jim Hume MSP, Freida Park, Lynn Henderson,
Liz Elkind, Ann Henderson, Brian Pollit

3. Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the last meeting (14th December 2011) moved as a correct record by Ronnie Moran and seconded by Jan Pietrasik

4. Matters Arising

i) Possible visit of New Cuban Ambassador

Elaine Smith MSP was pleased that the Ambassador was now present to address the meeting.

ii) Joint Cuba/UK Art Exhibition

Beyond the Frame was currently underway in Glasgow and Elaine urged anyone who had not yet seen the exhibition to attend. Elaine also stated that the preview exhibition the previous week in the Parliament was well received by the Members.

iii) Scottish Parliament – Developing closer links with Cuban Embassy
Neil Findlay MSP was still awaiting a response from Minister, Fiona Hyslop

iv) Scotland Week

The “Scotland” week held in Cuba seemed to be more of a trade event which was attended mainly by Whisky companies.

v) Scotland Honorary Consul

This issue will be carried forward to a future meeting of the group.

vi) 50th Anniversary of the Blockade

A motion on the Anniversary was lodged by Neil Findlay. That and other motions lodged were circulated.

vii) Cuba conservation Trust - Ian Parsons

The Trust has now been registered as a charity by the OSCR; charity number SCO43095. It has been registered as a Scottish company limited by guarantee (Company Number 421841).

The initial draft fundraising presentation, intended for commercial sponsors can be seen at: <http://dl.dropbox.com/u/76819133/CCT-120507.ppt>

This document is confidential until approved by the main interested parties, when it will be placed on the Trust web site.

The comments of members of the cross party group were invited

5. Venezuela Solidarity Campaign

Phil McGarry was unavailable to attend the meeting, however, **Elaine Smith MSP** advised that most recent information on the region was the 6th Summit of the Americas which opened with the issue of Cuba. Only two countries dissented over the inclusion of Cuba, while the member states of ALBA said that a summit without Cuba was "unjustified and unsustainable" and that they would boycott future summits without Cuba.

6. Miami Five

Elaine welcomed the family members from Miami Five in attendance and expressed how pleased she was that they and the Cuban Ambassador were able to visit to attend the Beyond the Frame Exhibition in Glasgow and also the first ever Debate on Cuba which was held earlier in the Chamber. Elaine then invited Tonito, son of Antonia Guerrero to speak to the group.

Tonito thanked the group for their continuing efforts and support on behalf of his father and the Miami Five and his extended family. This was the first time he had been to the country and found it to be an amazing experience and spoke of the positive effect that all supporters were having on the spirits of the Miami Five.

Rose Aurora then addressed the group expressing her appreciation of the warmth and solidarity shown. She said she found the Members Debate inspiring, motivating and challenging. Rose Aurora also expressed the need to keep up all support for the injustice of the Miami Five.

The Family members then answered questions from MSP'S and the group.

Kath Campbell gave an update on the Scottish Cuba Solidarity Campaign, the on-going support they give to the Miami Five and that they recently had a very good meeting with STUC to encourage their Members to be more involved.

Elaine thanked everyone for their contributions and stated that she hoped the Miami Five will address the group personally in the future, when justice is achieved and they are released.

7. Esther Armenteros Cardenas, Cuban Ambassador

Elaine then welcomed the Ambassador, stating that the timing of the visit had come together very well with the Ambassador attending Beyond the Frame and the Members Debate.

The **Ambassador** then addressed the group expressing her pleasure at being able to come the group meeting and thanking everyone for their solidarity.

The Ambassador outlined her own background and the benefits the revolution had given to Cuba especially in areas of health, culture, education and renewable energy. She also discussed the Miami Five, current reforms in Cuba and changes to the economy.

The Ambassador then answered questions on a number of topics from the group.

8. Elaine thanked Tonito, Aurora and the Ambassador for their contributions and closed the meeting.

The date of the next meeting will be advised in due course.