

**Cross Party Group on Cuba**  
**13<sup>th</sup> September 2012**  
**Committee Room 4**

1. Elaine Smith MSP welcomed everyone and said she was particularly delighted to welcome the special guests;

Dr Aleida Guevara  
Luis Marron, ICAP

**2. ATTENDEES**

Elaine Smith MSP	Sandra White MSP
Neil Findlay MSP	Iain Gray MSP
Lesley Dobbin	Marlyn Glen
Kath Campbell	Gerry Corbett
Phil McGarry	Cllr Gordon Munro
Jan Pietrasik	Ronnie Moran
Tommy Kane	Dodi Weppler
Dominic Kane	John Quinn
Billy Kane	Bruce Adamson
Pauline Boyle	Stewart Hyslop
Adrienne Chalmers	Neil Anderson
Vicky Grandon	Liz Elkind
Margaret McGregor	Gordon Scobie
Dorothy Sharkey	Kath Bateman
David Russell	Ray Newton
Joan Cutting	Pat Newton
Eilidh Munro	Matthew Peace
Dimitris Koborozos	Jo Hobbett
Alan Hobbett	Ian McLauchlin

**APOLOGIES**

Murdo Fraser MSP, Jim Hume MSP, Hugh Henry MSP, Drew Smith MSP, Ann Henderson, Brian Pollitt, Dougie Kerr, Ian Parsons

### **3. Minutes of the last meeting**

Minutes of the last meeting (9<sup>th</sup> May 2012) moved as a correct record by Ronnie Moran and seconded by Ray Newton

### **4. Matters Arising**

#### **i) Joint Cuba/UK Art Exhibition**

It was noted that a report on the successful Beyond the Frame exhibition has been emailed to all group Members and Jan Pietrasik agreed to give a full update at a future meeting of the group.

ii) Scottish Parliament – Developing closer links with Cuban Embassy  
Neil Findlay MSP previously wrote to Minister, Fiona Hyslop and a copy of her response was distributed along with the minutes of the previous meeting.

#### **iii) Scotland Week**

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

#### **iv) Bank of Scotland/Lloyds banking Group**

Elaine updated the group on a situation regarding the Bank of Scotland’s decision to withdraw their services from Caledonia Languages because of their links to Cuba. Elaine had written to the Bank on behalf of the company and also raised this with the Cabinet Secretary for Culture & external Affairs and Dr Vince Cable, Secretary of State for Business. Following the complaints by Caledonia Languages and support from Elaine the service has resumed. Kath Bateman of Caledonia Languages shared her experience of the situation with the group expressing her concern about the way in which the Bank dealt with the situation which caused her great stress over a 12 month period. Kath also advised that two other Scottish Companies had also experienced similar issues with the Bank.

### **5. Venezuela Solidarity Campaign**

Phil McGarry thanked the group again for the opportunity of speaking to the group on the wider issues of Latin American countries. Phil gave an update on the forthcoming elections in Venezuela and outlined the difficulties faced by the Venezuelans during the election period with regard to candidates being discredited, being subject to a smear campaign and the alleged support being given to opposition candidates by the USA. Phil requested a motion be drawn similar to a recent one tabled by MP’s at Westminster and suggested that the Venezuelan Ambassador be invited to speak at a future meeting.

## **6. Miami Five**

**Kath Campbell** expressed her appreciation of the success of the recent Beyond the Frame Exhibition which had not only raised £40k but also the profile of the campaign. She especially noted the organisation and support for the events in Scotland and was pleased that Elaine had secured the Members Debate at that time. She also advised that the current situation regarding the Miami Five was largely unchanged at this time. Although Rene Gonzalez had been released he was still forced to remain in the US. A presidential pardon now seems to be the only avenue that can be taken. Kath stressed the importance of keeping up pressure on the US Government to help break the silence on the information which the US hasn't disclosed to the defence lawyers for 14 years. Kath also noted that an early day motion had been lodged by Michael Connerty MP.

## **7. Luis Marron ICAP**

Luis expressed his pleasure at being back in Scotland and speaking with the Cross Party Group on Cuba. He advised that official relations were getting stronger between Britain and Cuba but could be better. He was pleased to see the letter from Fiona Hyslop that the Scottish Government was open to better relations and hoped that the work already underway by companies such as Havana Energy gave hope for future potential. Luis also advised the group that visitors from Britain to Cuba had increased and that they were the second highest nation visiting. Luis also expressed his appreciation for the support given to the Cuban people from Scotland. He thanked everyone for their continued excellent support, noted the growth in the Scottish Cuba Solidarity Campaign from his first visit and recognised the success of Beyond the Frame which was well noted in Cuba. Luis was also pleased the Miami Five family members had been able to address the group. He also noted appreciation in the work done by Trade Unions, Elaine Smith, Sandra White and all MSPs and again thanked everyone for their solidarity and hoped that this would continue.

## **8. Aleida Guevara**

Aleida Guevara then gave an inspiring talk to the group via Interpreter Vicky Grandon on her hopes and inspirations for Cuba and all Latin American countries. She then answered questions from Member of the group and finished by treating the group to a rendition of Fusil Contra Fusil by Silvio Rodriguez.

Elaine Smith closed the meeting, thanked everyone for attending especially Aleida and Luis and stated that the date of the next meeting would be advised in due course.

Elaine also reminded members that Aleida was in the country on a book tour and suggested anyone wishing copies of 'Remembering Che' contact the Cuba Solidarity Campaign.

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

The meeting was then closed.