

**Cross Party Group on Cuba
29th May 2013 6pm
Committee Room 6**

MINUTES

1. ATTENDEES

Elaine Smith MSP
Neil Findlay MSP
Ann McTaggart MSP
Kath Campbell
Margaret McGregor
Adrienne Chalmers
Cllr Gordon Munro
Matthew Crichton
Kath Bateman
Colin McCulloch
David Sharpe
Richard Le Sueur
Lesley Dobbin
Louise Clarke

2. APOLOGIES

Sandra White MSP, Murdo Fraser MSP, Jim Hume MSP, Drew Smith MSP, Phil McGarry, Tommy Kane, Liz Elkind, Neil Anderson, Dougie Kerr, Arthur West, Ian Parsons, Stuart Hyslop, Ronnie Moran, Marlyn Glen,

3. Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the last meeting and AGM (12th December 2012) moved as a correct record by Neil Findlay MSP and seconded by Sandra White MSP via email

4. Matters Arrising

Elaine Smith MSP confirmed the Office Bearers elected at the AGM

Convener – Elaine Smith MSP

Deputy Convener – Sandra White MSP

Deputy Convener – Neil Findlay MSP

Secretary – Liz Elkind

5. Viewing of Miami Five, Will the Real Terrorist Please Stand Up.

It was agreed to move the showing of the film to the end of the meeting

6. Kath Bateman – Celebrating 15 years of our collaboration with Cuban partners.

Kath Bateman, Director at Caledonia Languages-Culture-Adventure advised the group on the tribute and accolade awarded to her Travel company in March this year in Cuba in recognition of the mutual cultural benefit. Kath was personally awarded a Diploma from the Arts Council of Cuba. Kath gave a history of her work in the area which has included young volunteers from the Scottish Borders visiting Cuba and Kath then answered questions from Members. Kath noted the will and desire of Cuba to continue building and grow the strong cultural links already underway.

7. Update from the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign on matter of interest in the region.

Matthew Crichton, Secretary noted apologies from Phil McGarry who had previously held the post of secretary. Matthew then gave an update on the situation in Venezuela since the death of Hugo Chavez and noted the strength of the tributes from around the world and the subsequent election Nicolás Maduro.

Neil Findlay MSP advised that he was one of 130 independent international observers of the election and gave an account of his observations in that all observers signed the process as being free fair and robust and accurate. As the opposition are challenging the result the need for solidarity and awareness was noted and a flyer was distributed detailing an event on 15th June in Edinburgh to celebrate the life of Hugo Chavez,

8. (item 5) Kath Campbell, Miami Five

Kath advised the group that Rene Gonzalez was still in Cuba following his father's memorial. He was allowed to return to Cuba for his father's funeral on 22 April 2013, and a federal judge allowed him to stay there provided that he renounce his United States citizenship. **Kath** advised that while the other four remain in prison it is necessary to keep up the political pressure. **Kath** also advised that CPG Cuba member Freida Park's computer had been hacked and as she had lost all contacts would appreciate members getting in touch with her.

The group then viewed the film, Will the Real Terrorist Please Stand Up.

9. AOCB

Colin McCulloch expressed his difficulty in making payments into Cuba via Bank accounts and members discussed the on-going issues regarding this. **Elaine Smith MSP** noted that the Co-op bank were the most likely to do transactions due to their ethical policy.

10. Date of Next Meeting

Elaine Smith MSP advised the next meeting would likely be early October and that it was hoped that Author, Keith Bolendar would be the speaker. **Elaine** thanked members for attending and closed the meeting.