

**Cross Party Group on Cuba**  
**9<sup>th</sup> October 2013 6pm**  
**Committee Room 6**

**MINUTES**

- 1. Elaine Smith MSP** welcomed everyone to the meeting including guest speaker, Keith Bolender – Author and his wife Magalay and invited all members to introduce themselves.

**ATTENDEES**

Elaine Smith MSP  
Neil Findlay MSP  
Kath Campbell  
Keith Bolender  
Magalay Bolinder  
Adriene Chalmers  
Matthew Crighton  
Ray Newton  
Kath Bateman  
Colin McCulloch  
David Sharpe  
Richard Le Sueur  
Lesley Dobbin  
Liz Elkind  
Ian Parsons  
Elizabeth Parsons  
Cardina Vida  
Paul Harding  
Vann Smith

- 2. APOLOGIES**

Sandra White MSP, Murdo Fraser MSP, Jim Hume MSP, Drew Smith MSP, Phil McGarry, Tommy Kane, Neil Anderson, Phil McGarry Dougie Kerr, Stuart Hyslop, Ronnie Moran, Marlyn Glen, Margaret McGregor, Helen Martin, Ann Henderson, Rev Graham McGeoch, Freida Park, Cllr Gordon Munro

- 3. Minutes of the last meeting**

Minutes of the last meeting (29<sup>th</sup> May 2013) were moved as a correct record by Matthew Crighton and seconded by Colin McCulloch.

#### 4. Matters Arising

**Kath Campbell** gave an update on the Miami Five Campaign. Kath reiterated upon the need to keep up the political campaign and noted that 200 people attended the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the blockade. She advised that there would be a vigil in Glasgow on 7<sup>th</sup> November at Donald Dewar's statue and requested MSP's send messages of support to be read out which would be much appreciated.

**Kath** advised that the Cuba Solidary Campaign in conjunction with the Law Society were to hold an International Commission of Inquiry into the Case of the Miami Five on 7-8 March 2014 in London. This will include evidence from witnesses and force the issue into the public agenda. Kath hoped that Elaine Smith MSP would be able to attend especially given the past support from the Scottish Parliament and the fact that they were the only parliament who had debated the issue. A website was being established to include message of support. <http://www.voicesforthefive.com/>  
**Elaine Smith MSP** suggested the Official report of the debate be added to the website.

#### 5. Update from the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign on matters of interest in the region.

**Elaine Smith MSP** informed the group that given the high number of CPG's already being held that it was previously agreed that this would be a standing agenda item on the CPG on Cuba due to the mutual matters of interest in the region.

**Matthew Crighton** gave an update to the group on the current situation in Venezuela following the election of Nicolás Maduro and advised that the majority of Venezuelans believe that the country is progressing well e.g. the extensive house building project and the attempts being made to tackle crime and drive down poverty.

Matthew noted the forthcoming World Justice Festival being opened by Denis Goldberg and commented that the events Keith Bolender and Neil Findlay MSP were taking part in would offer hope and confidence to Latin America. Matthew also advised on events around the annual Latin American conference in London in December following on from the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Chilean coup.

**Elaine Smith MSP** thanked Matthew for his contribution.

#### 6. Guest Speaker: Keith Bolender

**Elaine Smith MSP** introduced **Keith Bolender**, Author of **Voices from the other side** and **Cuba Under Siege** and expressed the thanks of the group for Keith taking the time to come along to speak.

**Keith Bolender** gave the group an insightful history behind the American Policy and the resultant effect on the Cuban society.

Questions were then invited and answered by Keith.

**Elaine Smith MSP** thanked Keith for his fabulous and fascinating account of Cuban history.

## **7. AOCB**

**Ian Parsons** expressed concern at the on-going issue of banking which was impacting on business opportunities with Cuba. Discussions highlighted the many difficulties this was causing.

## **8. Date of Next Meeting**

**Elaine Smith MSP** advised the next meeting would be an AGM in accordance with the CPG rules. Future meetings would be advised in due course perhaps to coincide with Cuban visitors.

**Elaine** thanked members for attending and closed the meeting.