

Cross Party Group on Cuba
14th December 2011
TG20/21

1. Elaine Smith MSP welcomed everyone to the meeting

2. ATTENDEES

Elaine Smith MSP
Neil Findlay MSP
Lesley Dobbin
Jan Pietrasik
Tommy Kane
Jorge Aliaga
Struan Boyle
Colin Fox
Robert Amos
Stuart Moir
Kenny Selby
Renata Edge

Sandra White MSP
Hugh Henry MSP
Ian Parsons
Ronnie Moran
Douglas Mackay
Andina Aliaga
Pauline Byrne
Phil McGarry
Ray Newton
Zack Moir
Edward Cornock
Sandie Leggate

APOLOGIES

Murdo Fraser MSP
Drew Smith MSP
Ann Henderson,
Freida Park,
Dougie Kerr,
Neil Anderson,
Liz Elkind
Kath Campbell
Stuart Hyslop
Scott Lamond MSYP
Margaret McGregor

Minutes of the last meeting (28th September 2011) moved as a correct record by Ronnie Moran and seconded by Neil Findlay MSP

3. Matters Arising

4 (i) Elaine Smith MSP advised that she had now received a letter from the Cuban Ambassador stating that she would be honoured to visit a CPG group meeting in 2012. Her previous visit to Scotland was during October recess therefore she was unable to come to the Scottish Parliament. A suitable date for this will be pursued early next year.

5 (iv) It was confirmed that a selection of art from the Beyond the Frame exhibition will be exhibited in the Scottish Parliament w/c 30th April 2012 which will include artwork from the Miami 5.

Tommy Kane advised that he and Kath Campbell have written to Trade Unions asking for financial support for the exhibition.

6 **Elaine Smith MSP** informed the group that although she had written to the Cuban Ambassador seeking information on the "Scotland Week", no response was received as yet.

Question lodged by Drew Smith MSP were answered as follows;

2 November 2011

Index Heading: Finance and Sustainable Growth

Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it is aware of a Scotland Week or similar event being held in Cuba and, if so, what involvement it has had with any such initiative.

(S4W-03248)

Ms Fiona Hyslop :

I am not aware of a Scotland Week or similar event being held in Cuba.

Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive what it is doing to promote better and more links with Cuba in light of the signing of the bilateral agreement on cooperation between the UK and Cuba in August 2011.

(S4W-03249)

Ms Fiona Hyslop :

As I said in response to question S4O-00280 on 27 October 2011, we do not have any plans at present to develop links with Cuba in light of the signing of the bilateral agreement on cooperation between the UK and Cuba in July 2011. However, we are always willing to consider opportunities as they arise, prioritised to meet the need of our purpose of increasing sustainable economic growth.

The answer to the oral parliamentary question is available on the Parliaments website, the official report can be viewed at

http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=6482&mode=html#iob_59001.

Neil Findlay MSP advised that he and Tommy Kane would produce a letter to be sent to Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs regarding developing links with Cuba.

Sandra White MSP informed the group that in the previous term issues regarding developing links with Cuba were raised at the European and External Relations Committee who, at that time, were very interested. It was suggested that the group write to the current committee to ask if there are any plans to take the issue forward.

Jan Pietrasik advised with regard to “Beyond the Frame” that she had a very productive trip to Cuba and met with Charles Palmer and Brian McDonald who were involved in the recent Whisky Festival in Cuba

Elaine Smith MSP advised that Margaret MacGregor had been looking into the possibility of an Honorary Cuban Consul. Margaret will be setting up a meeting in the new year to progress the issue, however, it should be noted that this would have to be pursued by the Cuban Embassy

The Miami 5 vigil had to be cancelled due to parliamentary business and Kath Campbell will identify a new suitable date with Sandra White MSP and Neil Findlay MSP.

4. Presentation by Jorge Aliaga

Jorge Aliaga gave a presentation to the group on the current political situation in Peru, following the elections of President Ollanta Humala and the general political situation in Latin America. Mr Aliaga then answered questions from the group.

5. 50th Anniversary of the blockade: it was agreed that consideration should be given to lodging a motion on the 50th Anniversary of the Blockade and pursue the possibility of a member's debate.

6. Venezuela Solidarity Campaign: Given the high number of Cross Party Groups and the difficulty in setting up additional ones, it was agreed that there will be a standing item on the agenda of the Cuba CPG for an update from the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign on matters of interest in the region.

Phil McGarry then gave a presentation on the campaign and thanked the group for agreeing to the standing item, given their already close links with the Scottish Cuba Solidary campaign.

Phil advised that the group's first conference was held on 27th Oct this year and that the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign would welcome new

members. Additionally merchandise will shortly be available and details can be obtained from Phil McGarry.

7. A.O.B.

Ian Parsons gave the group an update on the proposed Cuba Conservation Trust charity. The objectives of the trust are to engage in reconstruction and restoration projects to assist the Cuban people to conserve their urban and rural environments in a sustainable manner.

Initial projects agreed with the Cuban Government are the restoration of the Cubanacan Art School and to repair the fabric and frescos of the Theatre Garcia Lorca.

It is hoped the Trust will be launched in Havana in January 2012 and Ian will update the group in due course.

Elaine Smith MSP thanked Ian for his contribution and invited questions from the group. Sandra White MSP suggested she speak with Ian directly regarding questions she has on the project. It was agreed that MSP's would lodge motion, questions etc. as appropriate having been advised by Ian.

Jan Pietrasik gave a full update on the forthcoming Beyond the Frame exhibition and asked if everyone could consider ways to assist with marketing, raising the profile and funding of the project.

It was agreed that there should be a regular update at the CPG meetings on the Exhibition. Motions would be lodged as appropriate and hopefully a Members Debate could be sought in due course.

Date for Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would be arranged when confirmation of a visit from the Ambassador is received.

Elaine Smith MSP closed the meeting and thanked everyone for coming.