

**Cross Party Group on Cuba
Tuesday 21st April 2015
Committee Room**

MINUTES

1. Elaine Smith MSP welcomed everyone to the meeting including guest speaker, **Her Excellency, Teresita Vincente**, recently appointed Ambassador to the UK, and her husband, **Counsellor, Antonio Rodriguez**.

ATTENDEES

Elaine Smith MSP
Neil Findlay MSP
Sandra White MSP
Hugh Henry MSP
Kath Campbell
Lesley Dobbin
Gordon Munro, Cllr
Alison Munro
Eilidh Munro
Phil Attridge
Ian Parsons
Matthew Crighton
Pauline Boyle
Stuart Hyslop
Colin McCulloch
Valentina Montoya
Graham Geoch, Rev
Ronnie Moran
Charlotte Kedslie
Stuart Dykes
Joan Cutting, Dr

2. APOLOGIES

Drew Smith MSP, Ann Henderson, Frieda Park, Kath Bateman, Liz Elkind, Richard Le Sueur, Tommy Kane, Ray Newton, Margaret Cameron

3. Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the last meeting (4th February 2015) were moved as a correct record by Matthew Crighton and seconded by Colin McCulloch.

4. Matters Arising

Kath Campbell gave an update on the work of the Campaign, including the release of the remaining Five. It was the first full meeting of the Cross Party Group since their release. Whilst it was wonderful that the Five Heroes were all now home, and that moves were being made towards normalisation of relations between Cuba, and the USA, the Campaign must remain vigilant. Cuba will continue to need support and

solidarity in order that they can continue along the path they have chosen. Kath was delighted to welcome the Ambassador on her first visit to Scotland, hopefully the first of many more. She had spoken to the STUC Congress the previous day, and had been warmly welcomed. The Ambassador and Elaine had also spoken to a packed Fringe meeting on Cuba.

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

Matthew Crighton gave an update to the group on the current situation in Venezuela covering the on-going attempts to politically and economically destabilise the government of Nicholas Maduro, and the steps taken to counter this.

Matthew highlighted a number of possible events upcoming in Scotland, and raised the possibility of a Latin American Social event (as suggested at a previous meeting by Neil Findlay, MSP) before the summer recess.

Elaine Smith MSP thanked Matthew for his contribution, and agreed to liaise with others in the Parliament about the Latin America social.

6. Guest Speaker: Her Excellency, Teresita Vincente, Cuban Ambassador

Elaine Smith MSP introduced Teresita, and expressed the thanks of the group for Teresita and Tony in making the time to visit the Scottish Parliament.

Teresita spoke to the Group on the recent developments in Cuba, and the USA following the announcement in December of the move towards “normalisation” of relations between the two countries and the release of the remaining Five. She spoke of the gratitude of the Cuban People for the support of the Cross Party Group, and the Solidarity Campaign in Scotland in securing their release and of the crucial role International Solidarity played. She also spoke about the need to maintain pressure on demands for an End to the Blockade.

She then responded to questions and discussion.

Elaine Smith MSP thanked Teresita for her inspiring contribution, and hoped she would return to Scotland again.

7. AOCB

Stuart Hyslop thanked Kath Campbell for her on-going support and organising the visit.

8. Date of Next Meeting to be confirmed.

Elaine thanked members for attending and closed the meeting.