

**The Scottish Parliament
Cross Party Group on Cuba
20th March 2019
6pm in CR5**

MINUTES

1. Welcome

Elaine Smith MSP welcomed everyone to the meeting especially the young Cuban Trade Union visitors, Yelena Gomez and Yuniel Espinosa Reyes.

Elaine requested that the group agree to move the agenda points around so that some of the MSPs could hear contributions from the speakers prior to leaving for other engagements.

Attendees

Elaine Smith MSP
Neil Finlay MSP
Sandra White MSP
Rhoda Grant MSP
Kath Campbell
Keith Stoddart
Alan Grant
Sean Duffy
Callum Baird
Arthur West
James Robertson
Paul Harding
Lesley Dobbin
Callum Jamieson
Pol de Vos
Paul Hutcheon
Jimmy Greenan
Eileen Ward
Natasha Aikman

Apologies were given by;

Murdo Fraser MSP, Colin Beattie MSP, John Finnie MSP, Pauline Boyle, Neil Anderson, Frieda Park, Dougie Kerr, Joan Cutting, Margaret Cameron, Zaki El Sahali, Liz Elkind, Kath Bateman, Margaret McGregor, Matthew Crighton, Kath Bateman

2. Minutes of last meeting – (AGM Oct 2018)

Elaine explained that the last meeting was a procedural meeting which took place in the parliament on 24th October 2018. A copy of the minute was distributed along with a GDPR statement.

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

Elaine conveyed thanks to Matthew Crighton, former Venezuela Solidarity Group member - in his absence, for his consistent support and information given to the CPG on Cuba over the years. She welcomed Keith Stoddart & Alan Grant as new members of the group to address the meeting.

Keith Stoddart gave an account of the current situation in Venezuela focusing on the humanitarian crisis and gave a good understanding of what is happening and the difficulties that have to be addressed. Keith informed the group of the increasing solidarity from Cuba, confirming that the liaison between the countries was a major source of medical assistance and aid to Venezuela.

Sandra White MSP advised the group that she visited Venezuela as an international observer and noted the right wing change of regime in the region such as in Chile. Sandra suggested the CPG could write a letter of support or lodge a motion on the issues. Neil Findlay MSP also advised he was an observer in the 2012 elections noting the interesting sophisticated voting system which included a considerable number of audits and that the recommendations from the observers were minimal.

4. Speakers:

Yelena Gomez: Member of Provincial Tourism Trade Union (SNTHT)

Yuniel Espinosa Reyes: Regional Secretary of the Energy & Mining Trade Union (SNTE) and a member of the SNTE national Executive

Elaine welcomed the Cuban visitors commenting that it was good to have visitors from Cuba to attend meetings, however, visits do not always coincide with the parliamentary calendar. She then invited Natasha Aikman from Cuba Solidarity Group to fully introduce the guests.

Natasha advised the “Young Workers” were there on a tour as part of the Cuba60 programme of events and had met young Trade Union members throughout the country.

Both Yelena and Yuniel gave an insight to the work they do and the Unions they are involved with, especially focusing on the extensive young workers Trade Unions involvement in Cuba. They both thanked the CPG for their continued support and solidarity reminding everyone that the main issues in Cuba are economic, caused by the blockade – the longest in the world. Elaine then invited questions from the CPG and the visitors responded.

5. Update of Cuba Solidarity Campaign – Kath Campbell SCSC

Kath Campbell reiterated the group's thanks to the young Cuban workers at the meeting. She advised the group of the forthcoming film nights which included "Nae Pasaran" and advised of the Cuba/Venezuela event on 15th April at STUC

6. A.O.C.B.

Kath Bateman informed the group of the collection points for the "Play for Cuba" campaign where musical instruments could be donated.

Paul Harding advised that The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) has announced Eusebio Leal Spengler – Historian of Havana City in the 2019 RIBA Honorary Fellowships. Although he couldn't attend the event, his speech was read out.

7. Date of Next Meeting

Elaine advised that the next meeting would be notified in due course with a further meeting scheduled for November with Keith Bolender.

Elaine closed the meeting and thanked everyone for coming.