

**The Scottish Parliament
Cross Party Group on Cuba AGM
2nd October 2019
6pm in TG20/21**

MINUTES

1. Welcome

Elaine Smith MSP welcomed everyone to the meeting, noting it was the AGM and that the meeting would start with the necessary Office Bearer elections.

Attendees

Elaine Smith MSP
Neil Findlay MSP
Sean McLaughlan
Kath Campbell
Phil McGarry
Alan Grant
Ann Henderson
Fergus Brown
Paul Harding
Lesley Dobbin
Callum Jamieson
Pol de Vos
Janet Bungener
Katrina Faccenda
Aaron Kelly
Kath Bateman

Apologies were given by;

Sandra White MSP (who had to call off at the last minute) Murdo Fraser MSP, Colin Beattie MSP, John Finnie MSP, Pauline Boyle, Pauline Bryan, Keith Stoddart, James Robertson, Neil Anderson, Frieda Park, James Robertson, Dougie Kerr, Joan Cutting, Margaret Cameron, Liz Elkind, Margaret McGregor, Matthew Crichton, Arthur West, Jimmy Greenan, Sean Smith, Cllr Gordon Munro

2. Election of Office Bearers

The following Office Bearers were elected

Convener: **Elaine Smith MSP**

Nominated by Kath Campbell
Seconded by Neil Findlay MSP

Vice Convener: **Neil Findlay MSP**

Nominated by Elaine Smith MSP
Seconded by Kath Campbell

Vice Convener: **Sandra White MSP**

Nominated by Elaine Smith MSP
Seconded by Neil Findlay MSP

3. Minutes of last meeting – (20th March 2019)

Previous minutes were approved as a true record by Neil Findlay MSP and seconded by Elaine Smith MSP

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

Phil McGarry, Chair of the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign, gave a report on the current political and social situation. He drew members' attention to the emergency motion agreed at the STUC which called for, among other things, all sanctions being lifted – see attached report. **Elaine Smith MSP** thanked Phil for his contribution and members discussed issues in the wider Latin America region. **Neil Findlay MSP** suggested that Graham Smith, Gen Sec of STUC be invited to a future meeting to discuss Columbia.

5. Update on Cuba Solidarity Campaign – Kath Campbell

Kath gave an update on the work being carried out by the Cuba Solidarity campaign and the current issues in Cuba, noting that Brazil had expelled Cuban Medics and how US policies under President Trump's administration were causing further hardship and visas were being refused. Kath also gave information on upcoming campaign events.

6. Speaker: Sean McLaughlan Press & Publicity Officer, NUS

Sean gave an uplifting account of his time visiting Cuba as a Unite delegate with the Young Trade Union Brigade, telling members of his experiences in Cuba, the lessons they learned and how this impacted on his life and work back to Scotland. He spoke of the particular highlights of the May Day event and meeting delegates from across the globe. Sean answered questions from Members, many noting the benefits to young trade Unionists these trips offer.

7. A.O.C.B.

Kath Bateman informed the group on the impact Thomas Cook going into receivership is having on Cuban travel, being the only operator from Britain. She gave an example of a Scottish Choir having to pull out of an international festival in Cuba. Neil Findlay MSP advised that Unite were holding drop in's for Thomas Cook staff in York Place.

Paul Harding agreed to update members on the Cuba Conservation Trust at a future meeting.

8. Date of Next Meeting

Elaine Smith MSP confirmed the next meeting would be on 12th November with guest speaker: Author, Keith Bolender

Elaine closed the meeting and thanked everyone for coming and in particular Sean McLaughlan for his very interesting presentation.