

BRUSSELS DECLARATION

We, the participants in the EPP-ED and ALDE Study Day on Cuba organised in cooperation with the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba gathered in the European Parliament in Brussels in 2 June 2005, guided by the respect for Human Dignity and International Solidarity towards the Cuban people,

- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and all relevant international human rights instruments;
 - having regard to the United Nations Charter;
 - having regard to Articles 6 and 11 of the Treaty on European Union and Article 177 of the Treaty establishing the European Community;
 - having regard to the EU Presidency statements of 26 March and 5 June 2003 concerning the detention of dissidents and members of the opposition in Cuba and concerning the relevant measures adopted unanimously by the European Union;
 - having regard to the European Parliament's early resolutions on the situation in Cuba and, in particular, its resolution of 17 November 2004;
 - having regard to the European Parliament's resolution on the Annual Report on Human Rights in the World 2004 and the EU's policy on the matter of 28 April 2005;
 - having regard to the "Proyecto Varela", one of the main movements of the Cuban civil society, which relies on the right to present petitions and to seek constitutional reform aiming to safeguard fundamental rights and freedom to Cuban citizens;
 - having regard to the European Parliament's informal initiatives on the Human Rights in Cuba, such as the "Sakharov Initiative", by which 206 MEPs called for a permanent invitation to Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas to visit Europe after March 2003 wave of repression in Havana, and which was welcomed by the Presidency of the European Parliament, the Commission and the Council, and the recent "Movement You are Not Alone – Movimiento No Estáis Solos" showing solidarity towards Cuban democrats;
 - having regard to the Prague Memorandum of the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba of 19 September 2004,
- A. whereas the defence of human rights is and must continue to be one of the goals of the European Union;

- B. whereas, after the arrest of 75 dissidents belonging to the democratic opposition in March 2003, the Cuban communist regime has exponentially augmented the disrespect for the rule of law and basic democratic rights of Cuban people;
- C. whereas the inhuman conditions and humiliations to which political prisoners are subject have an unbearable affect on them, on their families and on Cuban society as a whole;
- D. whereas the exercise of freedom of expression and assembly currently denied to the Cuban civil society are fundamental human rights, internationally recognized, that deserve global commitment and support;
- E. whereas the winner of the European Parliament's 2002 Sakharov Prize - Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas -, among other Cuban Democratic opinion leaders, has been systematically denied the freedom to travel to Europe and to accept the invitations repeatedly issued to him by the European Parliament and by other EU bodies;
- F. whereas the resolution of the European Parliament on Cuba of 17 November 2004 stresses that the European Parliament "*Calls for the immediate release of all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience who are being held in the country and once again condemns such detentions, which constitute an attack on the most basic human rights, in particular freedom of expression and freedom of political association*";
- G. whereas the aforesaid resolution also emphasizes that the European Parliament "*Considers that, in such circumstances, the release of all political prisoners, the granting of authorisation to Mr Payá Sardiñas and evidence of significant progress on the island as regards the promotion of democracy and the upholding of human rights and fundamental freedoms are essential conditions for any revision of the European Union's Common Position on Cuba and the measures adopted unanimously on 5 June 2003*";
- H. whereas paragraph 81 of the European Parliament resolution on the Annual Report on Human Rights in the World 2004 and the EU's policy on the matter clearly states that the European Parliament "*Calls on the government of Cuba to accept the right of free assembly and free speech and to immediately restore the unofficial moratorium on the death penalty; once more condemns the death penalty imposed on three hijackers and the imprisonment of political opponents, and asks for their immediate release; calls on the Cuban authorities to allow Sakharov Prize winner Oswaldo Payá to accept the invitation of the European Parliament; and condemns the sudden change of strategy and lifting of sanctions by the Council*",
- 1. Urges the Cuban authorities to immediately release all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience and deplors such detentions, which violate basic human rights, in particular freedom of expression and freedom of political association;

2. Urges the European Union to stand firm in the defence of its basic principles and to support the peaceful efforts towards a democratic Cuba;
3. Deplores the EU's change of policy towards Cuba that did not imply any positive effect on Human Rights and Civic Liberties in the country;
4. Points that totalitarian regimes such as the Cuban dictatorship always regard the softening of democracies' foreign policy not as a sign of goodwill to be reciprocated, but as a show of weakness to be abused;
5. Stresses that this policy change has had a harmful effect on the EU's international credibility and democratic reputation;
6. Urges the EU and the Member States to keep the Common Position on Cuba and to restore previous political and diplomatic sanctions towards Cuba until any objective, tangible signs show on the side of Castro's regime such as the unconditional release of prisoners of conscience, the freedom to travel in and out of Cuba of all Cuban citizens and specifically of Cuban dissidents, the reform of laws against basic freedoms (namely the brutal Law n. 88) and the holding of the referendum in the framework of the Cuban Constitution, following Proyecto Varela;
7. Protests firmly against last May's Cuban authorities' denial of visas to many European Parliamentarians and the later expulsion from Havana of others, namely two Members of the European Parliament that wished to meet with Cuban democrats;
8. Calls on EU institutions and Member States not to abandon Cuban dissidents and Cuban civil society and their efforts towards a democratic Cuba;
9. Recommends the Council to listen attentively to the advice on EU's Cuban policy coming from those 8 Member States that were recently freed from communist dictatorships and thus are more knowledgeable of similar situations;
10. Hopes that the winner of the European Parliament's 2002 Sakharov Prize - Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas - may finally come to Europe and urges the Cuban authorities to grant him the necessary permits in order to enable him to appear before the EU institutions and Member States;
11. Calls on the EU and Member States' diplomats in Havana to always invite dissidents on national holidays and other events thus giving them international visibility and contributing to their personal safety;
12. Declares the need to start immediately to prepare ourselves for post-castrism time as a new era of freedom, pluralism and democracy, peace and prosperity in Cuba and to assist in all possible ways the development of the civil society in the island;
13. Asks for the release of funding from EIDHR - European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights in order to provide material and financial support for internal Cuban democratic opposition which struggles for peaceful change towards free and democratic Cuba;

14. Instructs the organizers of this event to forward this Declaration to the Council, European Parliament and Commission, to the Governments and Parliaments of the Member States, to Cuba's Government and National Assembly of People's Power, to the European Parliament's political groups and also to Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas.

Brussels, 2 June 2005