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(OFFICE OF THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS)

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH 2
(DUBLIN 2)

Mr. Igor Blazevic
Director of Human Rights
and Democracy Department
People in Need
Sokolská 18
120 00 Praha 2
Czech Republic

January 2007

Our Ref : POL060854

Dear Mr. Blazevic,

Thank you for your letter of 15 December 2006 and enclosed copy of the Warsaw appeal to the EU and the governments of EU member states made on 10 December 2006, to which the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland, Mr. Dermot Ahern T.D., has asked me to respond.

Central to Ireland's relations with Cuba is the European Union's 1996 Common Position. As you may be aware, the aims of the Common Position include encouraging a process of peaceful transition towards a pluralist democracy, promoting human rights and improving the living conditions of the Cuban people.

The Common Position was reaffirmed at the General Affairs and External Relations Council on 12 June 2006, with the Council Conclusions adopted at that meeting reiterating that constructive engagement with the Cuban authorities, as well as continued dialogue with Cuba's peaceful political opposition and civil society, remain the basis of the EU's policy towards Cuba. The Council Conclusions of 12 June 2006 emphasised the EU's continued preparedness to provide EU co-operation to Cuba in areas that promote the transition to pluralist democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as in areas that promote sustainable economic growth and an improvement in the living standards of the Cuban population. However, the EU considers that full cooperation with Cuba will depend upon improvements in human rights and political freedom in that country, the restriction of which remains a matter of deep concern.

Ireland, along with our EU partners, will continue to pursue the policy of constructive engagement as provided for in the Common Position and to urge the Cuban

Government to respect internationally acknowledged principles and practices in the fields of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Yours sincerely,



Ciarán Madden
Private Secretary