

**PROPOSALS OF THE PDC (CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CUBA) FOR THE IDC-CDI
WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF A NEW ERA FOR CUBA**

The beginning of a process of normalising relations between the U.S. and Cuba in 2014 that has already culminated in the restoration of diplomatic relations between the two countries and the first visit to Cuba by an American President to Havana in 88 years, together with the signature of a Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and Cuba in March 2016, are undoubtedly crucially important for the dawning of a new age in Cuba's relations with the rest of the world and vice-versa. These two events were preceded by other significant changes such as Cuba's inclusion in the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States in 2010, its participation in the Summit of the Americas in Panama in 2015 and the visits of three Popes to Cuba in the last two decades.

Since its foundation 25 years ago, the PDC has maintained that openness and diplomacy, dialogue and reconciliation, civic mobilisation and peaceful negotiation have been – and still are – the best tools for bringing democratisation and prosperity to the Cuban people. Therefore, we are delighted that this thawing process with respect to Cuba is under way at global level and we will continue to support it with enthusiasm and hope. However, our greatest wish and aim is yet to materialise, i.e. genuine political democratisation and extensive economic liberalisation for the Cuban society. We believe that, in this new stage of development, this is the issue that still needs to be addressed. In order to achieve this, we need to reactivate two elements that have performed a very limited role so far and convert them into effective factors of change, in our opinion: civil society and Cuban democratic opposition on the island and among the exiles on the one hand and the active solidarity of the international democratic community on the other. The IDC-CDI, PPE [European People's Party] and ODCA [Christian Democratic Organisation of America] have a very important part to play within this context.

Our vision of Cuban reality in this new era is that the next two or three years are crucial so that the incipient transition in Cuba may take a truly democratic and pluralist direction, otherwise it may become an oligarchic succession that supports an authoritarian, repressive regime on the island for many years to come.

In order to conquer new areas of freedom, the people of Cuba must take advantage of the new climate where the official line of "a country under siege" is no longer valid and where repression against peaceful, democratic opposition can no longer be justified on the basis of alleged complicity with an external enemy that no longer exists. To do this, civil society must become stronger and the opposing forces work together more closely to shape an entity capable of promoting its struggle effectively and achieving more freedoms and rights for the Cuban people. It is with enormous satisfaction that the PDC recognises the effort already made by the ODCA with the cooperation of the KAS [Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung] to encourage and facilitate the start of a system of coordination for the Cuban opposition modelled in part on the experience of Venezuela's Democratic Unity Roundtable. The initiative involves convening meetings of extensive groups in Mexico representing the Cuban democratic opposition of the island and exiles where they can find out more about each other and discuss topics of common interest in a relaxed and safe environment. This Project has immense value and is a necessary and effective way of driving and facilitating the creation of consensus and



unitary platforms designed for the successful development of common strategies and joint actions by the Cuban democratic opposition.

The PDC believes that the further we progress in achieving the greater unity and strength of the democratic opposition, the more we will be able to influence the development of Cuban transition significantly. However, this alone may not be enough. We firmly believe that the active solidarity of the Latin American and international democratic community will also be a hugely important factor in this process. We are aware that no recent democratic transition in Latin America has succeeded with the mobilisation of the civil society alone. The continental and global democratic community has also played a very influential part in Latin American transition processes. The PDC maintains that Cuba is no exception nor will it be. It is for this reason that we wish to present a series of proposals for the IDC-CDI to consider, proposals that we believe are viable and have the potential to contribute enormously to mobilising not only the organisations and parties that belong to our political family but also other important democratic forces at international level to foster transition towards democracy in Cuba.

1. We ask that the IDC-CDI convene the other international democratic political organisations (Liberal International, International Democratic Union, Progressive Alliance and Socialist International) to a workshop to debate strategies and actions which could be undertaken jointly and separately by the community of democratic parties in the world, with the aim of promoting and facilitating a peaceful transition towards democracy in Cuba.

The PDC believes that this would be a viable initiative which, based on positive precedents in the history of the IDC-CDI, could be implemented successfully with modest resources and within a short period of time.

2. We ask that the IDC-CDI draft a public letter on the subject of democratisation in Cuba to be signed initially by former Latin American Presidents belonging to our political family and then submitted to former Presidents of other current democratic political parties for their consideration and possible signature.

The PDC believes that the IDC-CDI is responsible for taking the first steps to ensure that the international democratic community breaks the silence and begins to develop around Cuba similar campaigns to those conducted recently and very successfully in support of Venezuelan democrats by former Latin American Presidents with different political tendencies. As in the previous case, we believe that this initiative is viable and could be launched in the short term with limited resources. Clearly, the experience, prestige and political relations of President Pastrana would be invaluable for this undertaking.

Several sectors of the Cuban community, both within and outside Cuba, have witnessed and interpreted the birth of this new era with bitterness and maintain that the USA, European Union, Latin America and democrats across the world have abandoned those Cubans who have fought for more than five decades now for the democratisation of their country; they claim that they [the internationalists] have chosen to do business with the Cuban dictatorship, to engage in tourism on the island and to ignore the serious problems of the systematic infringement of human rights of the Cuban people that has been incessant. The PDC rejects that pessimistic view and prefers to continue working to forge a better future for Cuba. We have the support of the IDC-CDI, the PPE, the ODCA and all the member parties to achieve this.

Presented by Dr. Andrés R. Hernández, Vice-President Christian-Democratic Party of Cuba (PDC), Vice-President Centrist Democrat International
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