



Draft resolution

EPP Summit, Brussels, 25 March 2010

CUBA

1.- **The EPP and Cuba:** The EPP has always been at the forefront in the struggle for freedom and democracy in Cuba. The most recent example of this enormous concern over the situation on the island is the Emergency Resolution we adopted at our last Congress held in Bonn in December 2009.

From that time until now the situation on the island has continued to deteriorate. This time of year brings the seventh anniversary of the wave of repression unleashed by the Cuban authorities against the democratic opposition, known as Cuba's "Black Spring".

The death after 85 days of hunger strike of the political prisoner Orlando Zapata and the dramatic situation of the other dissidents and political prisoners, due to the mere fact of holding political positions in favour of freedom and democracy, flagrantly contravene the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which the Republic of Cuba is a signatory.

2.- **Cuba and the European Parliament:** We have seen with great satisfaction the passing by the European Parliament on 10 March of this year, with an overwhelming majority, of a Resolution vigorously condemning the avoidable and cruel death of Orlando Zapata, requesting that the Cuban Government immediately and unconditionally release all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience and calling on the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the Commissioner responsible for cooperation to immediately embark upon a structured dialogue with the Cuban civil society and with those sectors which support peaceful transition on the island. This resolution was also backed by the Socialist Party, which had seen how its MEP Luis Yañez had been turned back at the Cuban border for having written in favour of human rights.

We trust that the High Representative and the Commissioner will report back as soon as possible on the fulfilment of this aspect of the European Parliament Resolution.

Through this Resolution, the European Parliament shows its concordance with the cause of democracy in Cuba, which has led it to award the Sakharov Prize for

Freedom of Thought in the past to Oswaldo Payá (2002) and the Damas de Blanco (2005).

The response from Cuba's National Assembly causes astonishment. It states, among other things, that the aforementioned Resolution was approved "after a dirty debate" and that it "manipulates feelings, twists the facts, uses lies and hides realities". Statements of this tenor, which sadly remind one of the totalitarian language from which we suffered in the past in Europe, clearly show the true essence of the Cuban political system.

3.- **Cuban democratic opposition:** Due to the death of Orlando Zapata, we have witnessed a new propaganda campaign against the dissidents, who the Cuban regime describes as antisocial elements, mercenaries or common criminals. Unfortunately, these defamations sometimes find an echo with certain sectors of European citizenry. We wish to testify here to our admiration and respect for those democratic activists who, under exceptionally adverse conditions, work peacefully for the Rule of Law, pluralism and freedom in their country. Their civic courage, patriotism and democratic passion must not lead to ostracism, repudiation, prison or exile. That is why we commit ourselves to continuing to give them our support and solidarity.

4.- **In the international sphere,** at the European Partido Popular we have followed President Barack Obama's policy towards Cuba with interest. Since arriving in the White House, Obama has practised a policy of engagement with Cuba, in which, without forgetting the demands of freedom and democracy, steps have been taken with the aim of creating a favourable climate for normalisation of relations. The lack of a positive response from the Cuban side is very worrying and illustrative of the regime's resistance to change. During the recent visit of a delegation from the US State Department to tackle migration matters, led by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Craig Kelly, a meeting was subsequently held with dissidents in the US Interests Section. The regime described the act as a "provocation".

We call on the European Union's authorities to deepen dialogue and policy convergence between the United States and Europe on the situation in Cuba. We consider that the cause of freedom in Cuba is one of the subjects on which Transatlantic Dialogue can have its greatest force and effect.

Furthermore, we consider that the European Union needs to intensify its coordination with the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean in order to push the frontiers of democracy in the region. The Cuban situation needs to appear on the agenda of the sixth EU/LAC Summit to be held in Madrid in May of this year, as well as on the agenda of the Euro-Latin American Assembly.

5.- **Defending the validity of the EU's Common Position on Cuba:** In Europe, we have witnessed attempts in recent times by some Governments to change the European Union's policy towards Cuba based on the idea of critical dialogue with the regime conditional on the defence of human rights. Above all, it is argued that it is necessary to abolish the EU's Common Position, adopted in 1996, on the pretext that it has not worked and that it is not an appropriate instrument for motivating evolution towards democracy on the island. As a corollary, the replacement of the Common Position with an undefined Bilateral Agreement to

serve as a new framework for our relations with Cuba is proposed. This is also the demand from the Cuban Regime, as was the cancellation of the sanctions of 2003, which the EU finally agreed to remove. The EU has made tangible gestures and the Cuban regime continues to be resistant to change.

These efforts coincide with the hardening of repression and with attempts by the regime to consolidate itself beyond the founding figure of Fidel Castro by means of family succession for life. Despite the lack of political reform, the Cuban people live in alarming conditions of economic poverty as a result of the incompetence shown by Cuba's managed economy.

6.- Due to all the above, the EPP states the following:

- Full validity of the Common Position is more necessary today than ever. Considered in it, together with overall dialogue with Cuban authorities, including humanitarian aid and cooperation for development, is a dialogue with all the sectors of Cuban society, the maintenance and intensification of which we consider essential.

- The removal of the complementary measures to the common position adopted by the Union after the Black Spring was a serious mistake. In particular, the attendance of members of the democratic opposition at receptions in European Embassies constituted extraordinary moral support and a highly political symbolic gesture for their efforts in favour of democracy. We trust that these invitations are sent again for the next National Days for those Member States with Embassies in Havana.

- The death of Orlando Zapata has once again focused our attention on the extreme severity of the Cuban prison regime in general and that for prisoners of conscience in particular. Consequently, we demand that the Cuban authorities grant free access for representatives of the International Red Cross to the island's prisons. Likewise, we consider the presence of the United Nations' Special Rapporteur on Torture, Mr. Manfred Nowak, in Cuba to be necessary as soon as possible and without conditions.

- The greatest possible transparency in Cuban reality is essential to support Cuba's path towards democracy. For this reason it is necessary for the circulation of information via the internet to flow completely freely and for all Cuban citizens to have access to the Web.

- The EPP is ready to lend its voice to the Cuban people, where the citizens want the same as European citizens: a life of freedom and prosperity within the framework of the Rule of Law. For this reason, the European Union, given its historical line in favour of freedom and Human Rights, needs to involve itself in political action with the objective of facilitating a process of dialogue for all the people of Cuba which leads to a peaceful transition to democracy.