

Cross Party Group on Cuba - 30th April 2025

Present

Carol Mochan MSP – Convener

Katy Clark MSP

Invited Guests

Mr Pablo Ginarte Sampedro, First Secretary at the embassy for Cuba

Helen Yaffe, University of Glasgow

Attending

Kath Campbell, Scottish Cuba Solidarity

Kate Arnott, Cuba Solidarity

Pauline Boyle, Cuba Solidarity

Apologies

Mercedes Villalba MSP

Colin Beattie MSP

Maggie Chapman MSP

Agenda Items

Item 1- Welcome and Introductions

Carol Mochan MSP welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Item 2- Approval of Minutes

Minutes from previous meeting on 7th November 2024 were presented and approved by those in attendance.

Item 3- Scottish Cuba Solidarity Update- Kath Campbell

Scottish Cuba Solidarity campaigns in the UK against the US blockade of Cuba and for the Cuban people's right to self-determination and sovereignty.

Kath Campbell provided an update that the Scottish Trade Union Congress was backing a motion that day to remove Cuba from the State Sponsors of Terrorism.

The CPG heard from Kath explaining how grateful Cuba Solidarity are to have Mr Pablo Ginarte Sampedro here today.

Kath informed the meeting of Cuba Solidarity's monthly vigils on the 4th Saturday of month for Cuba and how these are normally held outdoors in Glasgow along with by monthly meetings.

The next Scottish Cuba Solidarity Campaign Vigil against the US blockade of Cuba takes place on Saturday 24th May from 1pm -1:45 pm in front of Marks and Spencer's in Argyle Street Glasgow. Anyone who can manage even for a short time to hold a placard, help hand out leaflets or just stand in solidarity will be welcome

Item 3- Invited Guests- Mr Pablo Ginarte Sampedro and Helen Yaffe

Helen Yaffe from the University of Glasgow thanked the CPG for the invitation.

Helen praised Cuba for the solidarity it has shown to the rest of the world especially Palestine and highlighted how Cuba is only a small Caribbean Island that has made impressive commitments to aiding other countries in need. The economic damage to the Cuban economy from the US blockade has been devastating to the country and if it could be removed then it would be better for everyone.

Helen has worked closely and written research along with helping to produce documentaries. When she goes to Cuba, she gets to meet people who are able to guide her on the big issues, the main one she has been able to focus her time on is on a new Alzheimer's drug called neuroEPO which is free and very advanced according to academics who are involved in trials.

Cuba has a small population so they are looking for assistance from global universities for laboratory time and scientific expertise. Helen noted that it would be great if we could have a screening at the Scottish Parliament of their documentary on the subject.

Mr Pablo Ginarte Sampedro First Secretary at the Cuban Embassy in the UK is a senior Diplomat who has over ten years of experience in analysis, bilateral political affairs, consular services and strategic planning.

Pablo thanked the CPG for welcoming him to the parliament and expressed the gratitude of himself and on behalf of the Ambassador to discuss the current situation in Cuba.

Pablo highlighted how huge the impact has been of the blockade that was placed on the Cuban people's lives and expressed Cuba's dismay on President Trump's 1st day back in office on January 20th 2025 when he reinstated Cuba as state sponsor of terrorism. As a result Cuban nationals have been turned down from being able to open bank accounts in the UK and have to use Spanish banks due the international pressures the UK banks experience.

He concluded by asking the MSP's present to please continue to ask their colleagues in Westminster to keep the pressure on the US to remove the Blockade on Cuba and to sign the Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement which was previously signed in November 2023 by the then UK government and Cuba which provided a framework for future political and economic dialogue.

Item 5- AOCB

Carol Mochan MSP asked invited guests 'What can my party do in Westminster?'

Pablo stated the number one thing that would improve the current relationship between Cuba and the UK would be if the 2023 agreement could be ratified under the new government. As Cuba has already signed their part of the agreement but they are still awaiting the same from the UK government. The agreement with European union has been ratified and it has been implemented within Europe.

Pablo noted that when President Trump reinstated Cuba as state sponsor of terrorism it was seen by the Cuban people as an attack and embedded fear of Cuba to the world however when King Charles (then Prince Charles) visited Cuba this showed support as to demonstrate it is not a threat.

Carol Mochan MSP informed attendees that she would write to the government on the issue of signing the Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement.

Pablo informed the meeting of the implementation of the national level 92 solar parks across the country to be completed by 2028.

Helen stated that by the end of 2025 they are expecting 50 to be up and running and that they will contribute 50% of the energy needs to the Cuban national grid.

Katy Clark MSP suggested the Cuba CPG MSPs should have a virtual meeting with the Cuba Westminster group members.

Item 6 - Date of Next Meeting

This will be agreed by the secretariat and Carol Mochan 's MSP office.