

**The Scottish Parliament
Cross Party Group on Cuba
12th November 2019
6pm in CR5**

MINUTES

1. Welcome

Elaine Smith MSP welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular Speaker, Keith Bolender who last addressed the CPG in 2013 and invited all members to introduce themselves around the room and advised that Rhoda Grant MSP had to leave early to attend another meeting.

Attendees

Elaine Smith MSP
Rhoda Grant MSP
Liz Elkind
Keith Bolender
David Bolender
Magaly Bolender
James Robertson
Richard Shillcock
Paul Harding
Lesley Dobbin
Janet Bungener
John Quinn
Peter Vandome
Lorna Cheyne
John Swinburn
Pauline Swinburn
Gordon Scobie
Mei Wan Scobie
Diego Rates
Andrea Sanchez

Apologies

Sandra White MSP and Elaine wished to note condolences from the Group to Sandra following the sad passing of her husband and noted a unusually higher amount of apologies including; Neil Findlay MSP, Murdo Fraser MSP, Colin Beattie MSP, John Finnie MSP, Kath Campbell, Pauline Boyle, Pauline Bryan, Fergus Brown, Neil Anderson, Dougie Kerr, Joan Cutting, Margaret Cameron, Matthew Crichton, Arthur West, Graham Smith

2. Minutes of last meeting – (2nd October 2019)

Previous minutes were approved as a true record via email by Neil Findlay MSP and Kath Campbell and seconded by Paul Harding.

3. Update from the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign on matters of interest in the region

Elaine Smith MSP explained that Graham Smith, General Secretary of STUC had intended to attend the meeting to give a report on Columbia, however, due to ill health he had to send apologies. He did, however, send a briefing which was distributed to the group, which gave contact details for Hasan Dodwell, Director, Justice for Columbia for further information.

Elaine then welcomed **Diego Rates**, a PH Student to give a report on Chile which was also distributed. Diego welcomed the opportunity of speaking to the group to highlight the ongoing human rights issues in his home country and was pleased that a motion had been lodged. **Elaine** confirmed she had signed the motion though advised that it was difficult to gain parliamentary time to debate such issues. **Liz Elkind** advised that perhaps a co-ordinated student campaign could help raise awareness, given many foreign students all around the world and advised Diego and Andrea to make contact with the Cuba Solidarity Campaign for Cuban student contacts.

Motion S5M-19555: Neil Findlay, Lothian, Scottish Labour, Date Lodged: 25/10/2019 State Violence in **Chile**

That the Parliament notes with alarm the escalation of violence that it considers is being perpetrated by the **Chilean** state against its citizens; understands that the **Chilean** people are protesting against stagnant wages, privatisation and increasing inequality, which has been met with violence by the state, including reports of torture and sexual assault against some of those detained by the government, and believes that Scotland should stand in solidarity with the **Chilean** people and condemn what is seen as the violence of the state and police.

4. Update on Cuba Solidarity Campaign – Liz Elkind

Liz Elkind gave an update on the work being carried out by the Cuba Solidarity campaign and the current issues in Cuba including the information that the majority of UN members again voted to the Embargo against Cuba but disappointingly Brazil voted with the USA whilst Columbia and Ukraine abstained. Liz also commented on the view of a rise in right-wing attitudes in Latin America. It was noted that Neil Findlay had also lodged a motion on the issues in Brazil.

Motion S5M-19806: Neil Findlay, Lothian, Scottish Labour, Date Lodged: 11/11/2019 Lula is Free

That the Parliament welcomes reports of the release of the former **Brazilian** President, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who it understands has been freed after more than 18 months in prison on charges of corruption; believes that Lula was favourite to win 2018's presidential election before he was imprisoned after being charged for offences that he has always denied; is concerned that Lula's imprisonment is believed by many to have violated **Brazil's** constitution, which it understands states that no one can be deprived of their liberty without due process of law, and was a political act to prevent a progressive president being elected, and looks forward to him being cleared of all charges so that he is free to challenge what it considers President Bolsonaro's destructive policies that are impacting **Brazil** and the wider region.

5. Speaker: Keith Bolender

Elaine welcomed main Speaker Keith Bolender, his wife Magaly and brother David, and advised that he would be able to give advice on how to obtain a copy of his latest book, Manufacturing the Enemy the Media War against Cuba.

Keith gave an excellent insight into the research and information used in his latest book, especially on media reports on Cuba. **Keith** answered questions from the group on issues about poor reporting by Media on many issues in Latin America and the change in US policies since Obama's Government.

6. Date of Next Meeting

Elaine Smith MSP confirmed the next meeting would be arranged when a speaker was available

Elaine closed the meeting and thanked everyone for coming and for everyone for their contributions and Keith for taking the time again to address the CPG.