

EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE



Deputy Secretary General
Economic and Global Issues

27 OCT. 2015

Civil Rights Defenders
Mr Robert Hårdh
On behalf of signatories of the letter to
HRVP of 15 Sept. 2015
Sweden

Dear Mr Hårdh,

Thank you for your letter of 15 September 2015 on behalf of a large group of Cuban and international signatories on the issue of EU-Cuba negotiations. I am grateful for this occasion to exchange ideas on the strategy of concluding an agreement with Cuba and the role of civil society in this process.

The aim of Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement (PDCA) negotiations is to create a framework enabling the EU and Cuba to enhance their dialogue and improve their cooperation. Hence, it is an instrument through which the EU expects to be in a better position to accompany the reform processes underway in Cuba and to promote EU values and interests. Therefore, the conclusion of the negotiations is not subject to specific political concessions or commitments by any Party. Once the agreement is concluded and implemented, it will provide the effective platform for constructive dialogue on all issues, including those that you raise in relation to respect of human rights, fundamental freedoms and promotion of democracy.

I fully agree that independent civil society and media need to be closely associated in the process of negotiating an agreement between the EU and third parties. However, each situation may require specific ways of keeping all actors involved. In the case of Cuba, this is achieved: i) via press de-briefings in Brussels before the negotiations and in the alternating negotiations venue after the negotiations, - these press conferences are also disseminated to the public online via the EEAS webpages - and ii) through individual contacts with civil society in Brussels and in Havana.

While negotiations on the PDCA are not yet completed, I can reassure that the Agreement will include respect of human rights and promotion of democracy as central elements both in the areas of dialogue and of cooperation. The agreement will also recognize the contribution of civil society with respect to reaching its objectives and will promote actions in support of greater participation in cooperation activities.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Christian Leffler', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Christian LEFFLER