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## **What the European Union Must Demand from Cuba in Negotiations**

The European Union and Cuba are now entering the final phase of negotiations on a political dialogue, cooperation and trade agreement. According to the directives established by the European Commission, human rights will remain at the core of EU relations with Cuba. However, the big question remains; How will this manifest itself in the agreement?

So far, the Cuban government has not implemented or announced any reform on the subject of civil and political rights. It is clear that the intention of Cuba is on the one hand to slowly open up its economy to foreign investment in order to achieve economic growth; which will make it possible for the Communist Party and the army to retain economic and political control, while on the other continuing to oppress all initiatives for the promotion of human rights.

It is precisely such a scenario that the EU must avoid by voicing clear demands in the agreement with the Cuban government. We therefore believe that the EU should demand:

***1. That the EU formally invites Cuban civil society to comment on the agreement during the negotiation process and ensure adequate space for civil society in the implementation of the agreement.***

When the EU negotiated an agreement with the countries of Central America, media, opposition and civil society were permitted to participate in the debate regarding the agreement. It is unacceptable that the EU could consider signing an agreement with the Cuban government without the involvement of the Cuban people.

***2. That the agreement with Cuba is written in the same tone when it comes to human rights as the one between the EU and the countries of Central America. In the latter, the promotion of peace, democracy and respect for human rights is central. It also contains requirements and specific mechanisms on how to achieve this throughout the document.***

If the EU signs an agreement compromising human rights standards, it undermines the political possibility of promoting positive change not only in Cuba but also in other parts of the world.

**3. That European businesses investing in Cuba are allowed to hire their own staff, and are not required to use personnel proposed by the Cuban state employment agency. Furthermore employees of foreign companies should also have the possibility to form independent unions.**

Several years ago the EU Commission established a strategy on Corporate Social Responsibility. Facilitating European companies' investments in Cuba without providing the employees with the possibility to organise themselves freely in trade unions, would violate this strategy.

**4. The Cuban government ratifies and starts implementing the International Covenants on Human Rights that it signed back in 2008. That it immediately halts the arbitrary arrests, repression and violence against human rights defenders. And that Cuba offers an amnesty to all political prisoners prior to the signing of the agreement.**

The relationship between the EU and Cuba is a concern to all citizens, Europeans and Cubans. All citizens have the right to be informed about the progress of the negotiations, and therefore be in a position to influence the process. As it is no surprise that the Cuban government does not listen to the opinions of its own people, the signatories below, Cubans and Europeans, direct them to the EU.

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