



Weydingerstr. 14-16  
10178 Berlin  
Tel. & Fax: (+49)30-29 49 42 60 /or 61  
e-mail: [info@netzwerk-cuba.de](mailto:info@netzwerk-cuba.de)  
[www.netzwerk-cuba.de](http://www.netzwerk-cuba.de)



Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights  
Ms Navanethem Pillay  
Palais Wilson  
52 rue des Pâquis  
CH-1201 Geneva, Switzerland  
eMail: [UPRsubmissions@ohchr.org](mailto:UPRsubmissions@ohchr.org)

Berlin, 28<sup>th</sup> August 2008

**Periodical Universal Examination of Cuba 2009;  
Examen Periódico Universal de Cuba 2009**

Dear Madam,

in view of the *Periodical Universal Examination of Cuba in 2009* we as the representatives of the NETZWERK-CUBA (NETWORK-CUBA) in Germany would like to present our experiences with the human rights situation in Cuba as rights which are not only theoretically given, but are already put into effect in the everyday life of the Cuban people. But at first a few words should be said about our own organisation:

The NETWORK CUBA is a non-profit association in Germany that unites under one roof the solidarity movement groups for Cuba from the entire Federal Republic of Germany. The NETWORK CUBA was founded in the year 1993.

The structure of the NETWORK CUBA is so called “basis democratic”. This means that our organisation understands itself as an instrument for bundling the forces of the individual organizations of the German solidarity movement with Cuba as co-ordination and information centre.

That NETWORK CUBA is the publisher of the NETWORK CUBA – NEWS & MESSAGES and supports actively the distribution of the German-language edition of the Granma International, so that there is a possibility for interested people in Germany to compare the widespread mainstream press-informations about Cuba with the informations of the official Cuba.

We are also active on the field of political and material solidarity with Cuba, and collect donations and collect informations for people in Germany about what is currently really needed by the Cuban population.

Through frequent stays of the NETWORK`s members in Cuba, we could become acquainted with the realisation of political and social human rights in Cuba in daily social practice. On should not forget: Cuba is a developing country, which – by those human rights, being already realised in the political and social everyday life – has become an encouraging and appreciative example in and for Latin America. In addition: Cuba has to be also acknowledged for those human rights, being already realised by its well developed structures of comprehensive education and by its health system, which establishes in the meantime in some aspects also a model for some highly developed industrial countries as for example for the Federal Republic of Germany.

Here is now our short overview, how – for the Members of the NETWORK CUBA – the actual human rights situation in Cuba presents itself:

### **The System of Elections in Cuba**

The constitution of the Republic of Cuba adopted by means of referendum in 1975 and amended by referendum also in 1992 fixes the bases, on which the functions of the national organs and the election-methods are developed. Under period IX, article 68, it is fixed, how the organs of the state are elected and how they can develop their activities. The Cuban people are controlling the work of the state organs, the representatives, the delegates and civil servants. The elected persons have to justify themselves and their work and they can be recalled from their offices before their official period of election ends.

In Cuba the choice is free, equivalent, secret and direct. The choice proposals come directly from the population. It is a right to be elected, which is widely seen in Cuba as a civil obligation.

For the elections in Cuba no entry of the voters is necessary. That represents a large challenge in comparison to the customary realised democratic procedures, because in many other countries only the voices of those are counted, which let themselves register as voters in the choice register.

### **Women in Cuba**

Cuba was the first country, which signed the convention to the removal of each form of discrimination of women and which was the second country that ratified it.

The practice of the sexual and reproductive rights including the free and responsible decision about their own fertility is ensured to the Cuban women.

Abortion is a free surgical interference. Women and men come into the benefit of the necessary achievements for family planning.

The Council of State of the Republic of Cuba accepted in 1997 a national plan of action in conformity with the 4<sup>th</sup> UN-World Conference on Women.

## **Childhood and Youth**

Favourable conditions for the development of children and young people consist as the result of consequent politics over 40-years and which has been aligned with social justice and equality in Cuba.

The well-being of the children is an inherent goal in the social project of Cuba. The attention and adherence to their rights is a strategy, which makes a conscious and systematic planning of actions possible in favour of the children.

With regard to the indicators for the characterization of the life-conditions of the Cuban children the country stands up to the comparison with the highly industrialized and rich countries in the world.

The political obligation of the government and the social mobilization of the whole people in favour of the children and young people - connected with the sense of responsibility of everyone on a decentralized level – has proved as the basic conditions, which will make it possible today and in the future to accomplish the high aimed goals and pay attention to a positive development of the rights of children and teenagers.

The state protects the rights of the children by the Constitution of the Republic through the different civil codes, laws and legislative decrees, resulting from this Constitution, among those: the Law Code for children and teenagers, the Law Code for the family, the Civil Code and the Criminal Code.

In Cuba a multiplicity of legislations, legal, administrative and other measures are valid, which refer to the rights of the children. On their basis the different aspects are generally regulated regarding maternity, paternity and relationship.

## **The Health Service in Cuba**

The guarantee of a free medical support for the complete population of Cuba since the beginning of the Cuban revolution in 1959 became a basic paradigm of the social policy. With the revolutionary victory the creation of the National Health Service began. The activities of the employees of this sector extended even on the most remote areas of the country. At the beginning of the 1960s in the framework of the already created Cuban health system important reforms were accomplished as main part of the transformations of the revolutionary stage at that time - in conformity with the unrestricted attention to the fundamental rights of each citizen.

## **The Educational System of Cuba**

The Government of the Republic of Cuba attaches the greatest importance to the comprehensive adherence to the common and special educational rights of their citizens. Since the beginning of the Cuban revolution the overcoming of structural and institutional obstacles for the unrestricted benefit of the general right for education stood in the foreground when developing new practical educational measures and programs.

The extermination of the illiteracy and the creation of conditions concerning the guarantee of a comprehensive and cost-free education were one of the first revolutionary measures at all

levels and in the required quality. That is today reality, for which the achievements of Cuba in this area give clear evidence.

### **The Development of the Cuban Culture**

The union of culture and education is a main column on which the cultural development of the Cuban revolution builds up. In the year 1961 – only two years after the victory of the Cuban revolution – the Cubans started with the execution of the alphabetization campaign as an important component of the politics promoted by the new government. So the overcoming of the long lasting cultural gap between rich and poor and between town and country was started.

At the end of the last century Cuba has already led the average educational level of his population to the standard of the 9th class. The country could and can count on a cost-free school system with an effective nationwide coverage.

Strengths like the high educational level of his population, the rich and versatile intellectual and artistic tradition as well as the ability for the assimilation of different art forms made it possible for Cuba and its population to be integrated with important achievements into the international cultural world.

### **What we think**

All this can only be an outline of our experiences regarding the basic human rights situation and human rights practice experienced by us and our member-organisations in Cuba, which certainly deserves to be explained and discussed in much greater detail.

But: The fulfilment of the human rights in Cuba through 50 years of their revolution is, however, worldwide an encouragement for many people – not only in developing countries.

Yours sincerely

Frank Schwitalla  
President  
NETZWEK-CUBA

Ekkehard Sieker  
Vice-President  
NETZWEK-CUBA