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Cuba and the EU

Relations between the European Union (EU) and Cuba are based on a political dialogue that promotes cooperation, respect for human rights and modernisation of the Cuban economy, and on the development of joint responses to global challenges.

The past two years have seen significant progress in the diplomatic relations between the European Union and Cuba, and the 1 November 2017 finally marks the start of a new chapter: the Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement (PDCA) starts applying provisionally, thereby opening the way for enhanced collaboration to the benefit of the Cuban and European people.

Between 1996 and 2016, the diplomatic relations between Cuba and the EU – first established in 1988 – were limited by the so-called Common Position. In an effort to update EU-Cuba relations, the EU re-launched a dialogue at political level in 2008, complemented by development assistance. On 12 December 2016, the repeal of the Common Position and the signature of the PDCA between the EU and Cuba set the stage for a new impetus in EU-Cuba relations.

EU-Cuba Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement (PDCA)

Negotiations for the Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement (PDCA) were launched in April 2014 and concluded on 11 March 2016. After the approval by the Council of the European Union, it was officially signed on 12 December 2016. In parallel, the agreement was submitted to the EU Member States' national parliaments and the Cuban National Assembly for ratification. The European Parliament gave its consent on 5 July 2017. Most parts of the agreement start to be provisionally applied as of 1 November 2017.
The PDCA creates an enabling framework for enhanced political dialogue, for improved bilateral cooperation, as well as for developing joint action in multilateral fora. It defines general principles and objectives for the relationship between the EU and Cuba and includes three main chapters on:

- **Political dialogue**, addressing issues, such as human rights, small arms and disarmament, migration, drugs, fight against terrorism, sustainable development, etc.;

- **Cooperation and sector policy dialogue**, including areas, such as human rights, governance, civil society, social and economic development, environment as well as regional cooperation;

- **Trade and trade cooperation**, dealing with principles of international trade and covering cooperation on customs, trade facilitation, technical norms and standards, sustainable trade and investment.

The agreement provides a framework for accompanying the reform process in Cuba.

### Political Relations

High-level political dialogue meetings were launched in 2008, in parallel with EU cooperation. Since then, both sides have discussed bilateral relations, regional issues in the Cuban and EU vicinity, and global matters of mutual concern, such as migration and international terrorism, with a view to defining potential areas of cooperation. The EU and Cuba seek to strengthen the United Nations as the core of the multilateral system, and to promote the strategic partnership between the European Union and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC). The first chapter of the PDCA foresees regular high level political dialogue meetings.
All 28 EU Member States maintain bilateral diplomatic relations with Cuba. An EU representation office was opened in Havana in 2003, and upgraded into a fully-fledged EU Delegation in 2008.

**Human Rights Dialogue**

The EU and Cuba established a regular informal human rights dialogue, launched in 2015 by the High Representative/Vice President Federica Mogherini and Cuban Minister of Foreign Affairs Bruno Rodriguez, in anticipation of the end of PDCA negotiations. Three high-level dialogues have been held since, in June 2015 in Brussels, in June 2016 in Havana, and in May 2017 again in Brussels, co-chaired by the EU's Special Representative for Human Rights Stavros Lambrinidis. The PDCA includes provisions to establish a formal basis for this dialogue, which allows both sides to exchange views on basic principles of human rights and address mutual concerns. One of the objectives of the dialogue is to identify areas to cooperate or share best practices. Independently of the yearly human rights dialogues, there are regular exchanges between the EU and Cuba on democracy and human rights related questions.

**Trade relations**

The EU remains Cuba's main export and second trade partner; the EU is also the biggest foreign investor in Cuba (mainly in the sectors of tourism, construction, light and agro-industries) and accounts for a third of the arriving tourists.

In 2016, exports in goods to Cuba were worth €2.04 billion, and imports amounting to €0.41 billion. Cuba's main export goods are agricultural products, beverages and tobacco and mineral fuels for which there is no preferential trade regime.

The aim of the PDCA is to create a more predictable and transparent atmosphere for economic operators and increase their economic capacity to produce, trade and create jobs, but it does not establish a free trade area between the parties or cover investment protection.

The EU advocates diversification of exports from Cuba beyond the traditional products, and cooperates to disseminate the necessary knowledge among Cuban exporters to improve the access of goods onto the EU market.

**EU-Cuba Development Cooperation**

EU cooperation with Cuba is covered by the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI). Development cooperation resumed in 2008, and in the first period until 2014, the European Commission committed around €90 million in the fields of food security, hurricane response and disaster preparedness, environment, climate change and energy, culture and heritage, support to economic and social modernization as well as management capacities.

A further €50 million have been allocated for the period 2014-2020 to support the development of the country on three sectors: sustainable agriculture and food security, environment and support for a
better use of key natural resources for sustainable development, as well as support to sustainable economic and social modernisation. The selected sectors respond to the national priorities identified in the "Cuban Guidelines for economic and social policy", which aim to promote reforms in the country.

In addition, the EU allocated another €5 million for the same period for social projects to support vulnerable population groups and cultural projects implemented by civil society organisations or local authorities.

Cuba also benefits from EU regional programmes in Latin America, covering a wide range of topics, for example supporting the internationalisation of Cuban SMEs, supporting cooperation on drugs policies or facilitating climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies. Other programmes address urban local development, the water sector, higher education cooperation and facilitating education mobility and capacity building in academic institutions, e.g. through Erasmus +.

With the start of provisional application of the EU-Cuba PDCA on 1 November 2017, the EU will sign its first agreement with the Cuban authorities setting the framework for the implementation of a bilateral project in the area of renewable energies with implementation done through international organisations or civil society organisations.

Humanitarian Aid

The European Commission's department for Humanitarian Response has been providing emergency assistance to Cuba since 1993, to support the population affected by natural disasters. Since then, more than €94 million were granted to humanitarian aid actions in Cuba. Given its disaster risks and the population's vulnerability, specific support for more than €6 million was provided to disaster preparedness, e.g. on seismic risk reduction, hydro-meteorological Early Warning Systems or resilience to droughts.

Following Hurricane Irma, the EU has provided €1.6 million in humanitarian aid to some 25,000 most vulnerable people in most affected areas. In the target areas, immediate response to shelter needs has been prioritised. As a complement, support to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in key health infrastructures, as well as epidemiological surveillance and rehabilitation of health services in the neediest communities will be provided.

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