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The **Association Switzerland-Cuba** (Asociación Suiza-Cuba - ASC) was formally created in 1973 in the spirit of solidarity with the Cuban people. ASC is inspired by the principles of solidarity, equality and fraternal collaboration among peoples, against any form of racism and oppression, for the safeguarding of collective and individual human rights, and for the consolidation of peace in the world.

**Written submission by the Association Switzerland-Cuba (ASC) to the  
UN Human Rights Council  
Universal Periodic Review of the  
Republic of Cuba, 4<sup>rd</sup> cycle, 2023**

1. Since its founding 50 years ago, the Association Switzerland-Cuba (ASC) has maintained a durable and lively exchange with Cuba and its people. Members of ASC national coordination and ASC members visit the island on a regular basis. Many members have family and friends in Cuba. They get direct insight into the reality of life in Cuba, in particular the negative impact of the U.S. sanctions regime on Cuba's human rights situation. ASC also organizes socio-cultural group travels to Cuba allowing for ASC members to have firsthand contact with residents and civil society organizations and visit key centers of civic involvement in Cuba.

2. Obstacles to ASC's efforts to materially support the Cuban people in the form of in-kind and monetary donations from Switzerland are a direct result of the extraterritorial application of the U.S. sanctions regime and its negative impact on the work of Cuba solidarity groups outside Cuba.

***Theme: A General framework of implementation***

3. The illegal U.S.-imposed economic, commercial and financial blockade on the Republic of Cuba and in particular its tightening since 2019 with 243 additional measures and the arbitrary and unjustified inclusion of Cuba on the U.S. State Department's list of State Sponsors of Terrorism, are the main obstacle to the full implementation of human rights for the Cuban people as they severely restrict the importation of food, medicines, medical supplies, fuel and other basic necessities to fully implement the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the Agenda 2030.

4. International, U.S.-dominated banks and financial institutions refuse to make money transfers on behalf of the Cuban government, making it almost impossible for Cuba to

acquire and sell goods and services on the international markets.

5. Although the Swiss government has not imposed sanctions on Cuba, Swiss financial institutions and US-owned companies in Switzerland submit to the extraterritorial application of the US-sanction regime against Cuba. Refusal by Swiss banks to make money transfers from Switzerland to Cuba makes it next to impossible for the Cuban community in Switzerland to legally send money to their families and friends in Cuba.

6. Refusal by Swiss banks to make money transfers to Cuba is also a massive obstacle to the solidarity work with Cuba from Switzerland, for example when Swiss banks refuse to transfer donations raised by the solidarity movement in support of Cuba's rebuilding of damaged infrastructure after the passage of hurricanes and other natural disasters.

7. Mainstream media reporting on Cuba – often misleading and one-sided – does not accurately reflect the reality of life for Cubans. The mainstream media hardly covers the negative impact of the economic, commercial and financial sanctions on human rights in Cuba. Instead, they place the blame for the economic problems directly caused by the U.S. blockade on the Cuban government; they also rarely report on the social and economic achievements of the government of Cuba in cooperation with civil society organizations in Cuba.

8. The media dis- and misinformation against Cuba has been massively exacerbated in recent years by digital platforms spreading both unchecked data about Cuba and shutting down hundreds of accounts and websites related to the Cuban government and to independent, non-corporate media outlets.

9. While the illegal U.S. sanctions regime negatively impacts every Cuban child, woman and man, it is particularly hard on Cuba's youth who are being robbed of the hope to lead a life in peace and prosperity. The blockade deliberately fosters a massive brain drain by forcing many young people of working age to leave their country for economic reasons, depriving

Cuba of some of its most skilled citizens.

***Theme: A3 Inter-State cooperation & development assistance***

10. During the world-wide Covid-19 pandemic, 58 Cuban medical brigades assisted health care professionals in 42 countries and territories in the fight against the virus.

11. As part of its long-standing internationalism and solidarity with peoples worldwide, Cuba has shared its vaccines with countries such as Iran, Mexico, Nicaragua, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Syria, Venezuela, Vietnam.

***Theme: A28 Cooperation with other international mechanisms and institutions***

12. Since the creation of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America - Peoples' Trade Treaty (ALBA-TCP) in 2004, Cuban doctors have performed eye surgery on over 3 million patients in 34 countries in Latin American and Caribbean and beyond as part of Operation Miracle, an ALBA-TCP program aimed at restoring eye sight to peoples in developing countries.

13. Cuba is a long-standing member of numerous international organizations promoting peace, trade, mutual aid and assistance based on the principles of solidarity and respect of national sovereignty and self-determination, including the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America – Peoples' Trade Treaty (ALBA-TCP) and The Community of Latin American & Caribbean States (CELAC).

***Theme: A41 Constitutional and legislative framework***

14. On February 24, 2019 the Cuban people adopted a new Constitution which expanded the protection of basic human rights such as the universal access to clean water, healthy and adequate food, health care, education, adequate and save housing, culture and sports, the right to live in a healthy environment as well as the right to participate in the formation, exercise and control of the power of the State.

15. On September 25, 2022, the Cuban people adopted the New Families Code, one of the most progressive worldwide. The New Families Code recognizes families in all their forms, treating families based on ties of affection and care equally to families based on biological ties.

16. The New Families Code specifically protects the rights of parents and children by guaranteeing parents' right to their children and children's right to their parents.

***Theme: A47 Good governance***

17. The massive tightening of the illegal U.S. sanctions regime and its extraterritorial application since the Covid-19 pandemic leading to shortages of certain food items and other basic necessities in Cuba has fostered criminal activities such as corruption in Cuba. In order to fight corruption and protect its citizens against artificially increased food prices, the Cuban government has increased its anti-corruption program over the last years.

***Theme: B71 Human rights and the environment***

18. Cuba is a worldwide leader in disaster prevention and relief. Before Hurricane Ian hit the island on September 27, 2022, over 50,000 residents in at-risk areas were evacuated by Cuba's civil defense corps and taken to safe places where they were provided with food, medical care and all necessities for as long as needed. Only five people died in relation to the Category 3 hurricane.

19. Right after Hurricane Ian hit Cuba's Western provinces on September 27, 2022, destroying over 100,000 buildings and massively damaging the power supply infrastructure and agriculture, volunteer electricians and construction workers traveled a thousand kilometers from Cuba's Eastern provinces to the most affected areas to start rebuilding the island's infrastructure. Organizations of lawyers, women, etc., brought much needed supplies and basic resources.

***Theme: D7 Right to participation in public affairs and right to vote***

20. The Cuban people actively participated in the drafting of the New Families Code during a consultation process involving more than 6 million Cubans in 80,000 meetings held throughout the country. This resulted in modifications of 47.93% of the original draft code and the introduction of new elements which represent 2.06% of the code.

21. ASC members who travelled to Cuba during the period of time leading up to the vote on the New Families Code had numerous conversations with Cubans from all walks of life who were engaged in lively debates about the Families Code.

22. In order to guarantee the right to vote to workers in the tourism sector, polling stations were set up in hotels, allowing the hotel staff to participate in the voting process about the New Families Code during working hours.

***Theme: D8 Rights related to marriage & family***

23. The New Families Code with over 100 articles defines the basic values of family as being love, affection, solidarity and responsibility. It expands and protects the rights of children, youth and elderly people and defines the rights and obligations of grandparents. The New Families Code abolishes the head of the family and replaces it with parental responsibility.

24. The New Families Code stipulates that people of the same sex can found a family.

***Theme: E22 Right to food***

25. The economic, commercial and financial sanctions imposed on Cuba by the US-government and their extraterritorial application severely restrict Cuba's access to international food markets. To reduce Cuba's dependency from food imports, the Cuban government has launched in February 2022 "Cuba's Food Sovereignty and Nutritional Education Plan" ("El Plan de Soberanía Alimentaria y Educación Nutricional de Cuba"),

involving more than 300 experts and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

26. To guarantee the right to food for the Cuban people (SDG goal #2), the Cuban government has implemented 58 key programs in cooperation with the UN in different areas of the island, including increased local food production and distribution and the development of digital information and monitoring systems to keep track of food production and availability. One example is the application "Donde hay?" which provides data about the availability and cost of specific food items and other goods.

***Theme: E41 Right to health - General***

27. Article 72 of the Constitution of the Republic of Cuba guarantees the right to universal, free-of-charge public health care to the Cuban people. The economic, commercial and financial sanctions imposed on Cuba severely limit Cuba's access to medicine, medical equipment and other basic health care necessities, constantly putting at risk the lives of thousands of Cuban children, women and men.

***Theme: E42 Access to health-care (general)***

28. Cuba's community-based health care system has saved countless Cuban lives during the Covid-19 pandemic despite the increased economic, commercial and financial sanctions. With 75.31 deaths per 100,000 residents (John Hopkins University Coronavirus Resource Center, February 27, 2023), Cuba has a low number of casualties related to Covid-19 compared to other countries. For comparison, there are 339.81 casualties per 100,000 residents in the U.S.

29. Cuba is the first country in Latin America to successfully develop three vaccines - Abdala, Soberana 02 and Soberana Plus - against Covid-19 in the midst of a worldwide pandemic. It has made the vaccines available to countries worldwide whose access to Covid-19 vaccines has been denied due to the refusal of certain countries to waive intellectual property rights to protect the interests of multinational, profit-driven pharmaceutical corporations.

30. By March 3, 2023, 43,686,470 doses of Covid-19 vaccines had been administered to the Cuban population. 90.3% of the Cuban population is fully vaccinated, including children from the age of 2.

***Theme: F14 Participation of women in political and public life***

31. With 53.4% of female members in parliament in 2002, Cuba has the second highest percentage of women deputies. The equal participation of women in Cuba is promoted through the Federation of Cuban Women, founded in 1960, which unites about 4 million women in Cuba.

***Theme: F31 Children: definition; general principles; protection***

32. Cuba's New Families Code introduces the right of parents to their children and the right of children to their parents. This set of rights is particularly significant in preventing attacks against Cuban families, as occurred during the CIA Operation Peter Pan 1960-1962, when over 14,000 unaccompanied Cuban minors were separated from their families and sent to the United States with the collaboration of the Catholic Church in the US and the Catholic Church in Cuba.

33. ASC urges the UN Human Rights Council to recognize Cuba's achievements in the implementation of fundamental human rights, in particular SDGs #1 (eradication of poverty), #2 (end hunger and achieve food security), #3 (ensure healthy lives and well-being for all at all ages) and #5 (achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) in the face of the economic war waged on Cuba by the United States and the European Union as well as the extraterritorial application of the illegal blockade by Switzerland. An immediate end to the illegal economic, commercial and financial Blockade against Cuba is essential to fully guaranteeing the Cuban people the full enjoyment of their human rights.