

14<sup>th</sup> March 2023

**The Office of the High Commissioner:**

**To whom it may concern:**

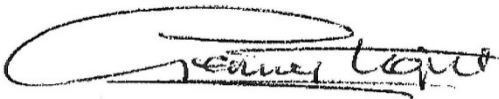
Mandate Trade Union is the retail union of first choice in the Republic of Ireland with approximately 30,000 members. Our organisation was founded through the amalgamation of two unions in 1994 (IDATU and INUVG & ATA).

Mandate is affiliated to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

Mandate organises retail, bar and administrative workers and campaigns on a wide variety of issues reflecting our social justice agenda and the important role Mandate has in Irish society.

Please find attached Mandate's submission in support of the Republic of Cuba focusing primarily on civil and political rights.

**Yours sincerely**  
**For Mandate Trade Union**



**Gerry Light**  
**General Secretary**

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**General Secretary: Gerry Light**  
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Mandate Trade Union welcomes the opportunity to make a submission under The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism of the Human Rights Council. In doing this we support the aim of this exercise which is to improve the human rights situation in all countries and address human rights violations wherever they occur.

Mandate Trade Union acknowledges and supports Cuba's democratic system based on the principle of respect for civil and political rights and specifically in this regard we would like to highlight some of the advances made in these areas since our last submission of this nature which was made in 2017.

It is clear and accepted that up to the year 1959 the meaningful involvement of citizens in political life was not democratic in nature. Cuban society prior to 1959 was marked by violence and political corruption and this provided cycles of poverty and extremely low living standards. Inequality in Cuba pre 1959 was driven by the interests of elites and in particular foreign elites.

Over the intervening year Cuba has developed a framework whereby periodic elections are conducted in a manner in which its citizens are highly involved. It is a process with broad and deep participation which historically exceeds a level of 90% of all those entitled to vote. Furthermore, citizens have equal access to the highest public positions, based on capabilities and merits and not dependent on their economic or financial capacity. On a broader level, Cuba engages civil society in a way which includes the right to many organisations and trade unions to elect, nominate and propose candidates.

Over recent decades Cuba's legal and institutional framework has been improved in order to preserve and strengthen social justice and solidarity. These legislative updates have been reflected in new or renewed rules regarding the follow key areas:

- The leasing of land
- Social security
- Employment
- Housing

- Self-employment
- Migration policy

Further positive advancements have also been delivered in the following:

- Protection of the Elderly
- Educational rights
- Rights for people with disabilities
- Cultural rights and access to art and culture along with freedom of artistic expression

More recently apparent are the specific progressive steps taken in relation to the crucially important area of gender equality and empowerment of women. In this regard the new Constitution specifically enshrines equal rights and responsibilities between women and men at all levels of society. Additionally, women's rights to health, including sexual and reproductive health and family planning, will be recognised, protected, and guaranteed. Working mothers also enjoy the rights to maternity leave and social protection for up to one year.

Another important development linked to gender equality and the empowerment of women has been brought about through the introduction of the new Family Code which seeks to solve family matters with immediate and specialised legal entities. Amongst the most relevant aspects of the Code is the expressed recognition of the right to a family life free of violence in any of its manifestations.

Cuba has also developed a National Program for the Advancement of Women (PAM) which specifically promotes actions aimed at achieving greater comprehensiveness and effectiveness in the prevention and elimination of manifestations of discrimination against women, as well as strengthening the mechanisms and professional capacity of public officials to incorporate gender issues in the development of policies, programs and in the provision of services.

Regarding the management of the Covid-19 global pandemic, Cuba has established an impressive track record. Cuba has a rate of recovered patients from Covid-19 of 99.2% of diagnosed cases, which is an expression of the efficacy of the approved clinical protocol and the preparation of health professionals. It also reflects the historical model of quality and accessible public health care which has existed for many years. Impressively Cuba developed three vaccines and two of its own vaccine candidates to immunize its population, which have proven to be highly effective through the delivery of 42 million doses. Records show that 90.3% of the population completed the vaccination programme. Reflecting its commitment to international solidarity Cuba sent 4,700 specialists to 42 countries to support the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.

Not surprisingly Mandate Trade Union applauds Cuba for its trade union freedoms which has resulted in a large percentage of all workers unionised and protected under collective agreements.

Despite the continuing abhorrent US blockade policy which has been in place for more than 50 years, Cuban society has demonstrated immense resilience and bravery notwithstanding this serious and systematic violation of their human rights by the USA. There can be no doubt that the continuation of this unjustifiable measure imposes unnecessary hardship on Cuba and its citizens. To some degree the existence of the blockade prevents a speedier roll out of enhancements to already existing policies and the development of further progressive citizen friendly practices and legislation that Cuba clearly wants to achieve.

Mandate Trade Union contends that the constitution of the Republic of Cuba establishes core fundamental rights, duties and guarantees of citizens, as well as the basis for their respect, realisation, and protection. We also hold the view that this range of initiatives have been strengthened and expanded in the years since our last submission.

In conclusion Mandate Trade Union fully supports the Republic of Cuba and their application of universal civil and political rights.