

UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL (Fourth Cycle) OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA – INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE HUMANITARIAN ASSOCIATION SEMI DI PACE – ODV

ORGANISATION: HUMANITARIAN ASSOCIATION SEMI DI PACE – ODV (C.F. 90030440565)

CONTACT PERSON-LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE: PROFESSOR LUCA BONDI, PRESIDENT

TELEPHONE NUMBER: + 39 0766 842709

ADDRESS: LOCALITÀ VIA VIGNA DEL PIANO SNC - C/O 'LA CITTADELLA', TARQUINIA (VITERBO) - ITALY -

E-MAIL ADDRESS: presidenza@semidipace.org

WEBSITE: www.semidipace.org

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1. FIRST PART: SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE ORGANISATION AND OF THE ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT BY THE SUBJECT CONFERRING THE CONTRIBUTION

- The Humanitarian Association Semi di Pace was founded in Tarquinia in 1980 by Luca Bondi, its current President (also Member of the World Council of the José Martí Project of International Solidarity – UNESCO). Peace, brotherhood and unity among individuals and peoples are the core values of the Association, which is a non-profit organisation, built upon the voluntary contributions of many citizens, that promotes a culture of respect and dialogue in all aspects of social life, with particular attention to the world of youth, to avoid and remove situations of marginalisation, deviance and abandonment while aiming for the integral development of the human person. To date, the organisation counts men and women of goodwill and people belonging to different cultures and religions.
- The Association intervenes in support of the vulnerable citizens through targeted project actions, such as the weekly collection and redistribution of clothing and basic foodstuffs, within the Municipality of Tarquinia and surrounding areas. To respond to the multiple criticalities of the area, the Association proposes an integrated system of social-welfare services, such as the promotion of a solidarity-based and sustainable economy.
- The Association has been registered in the Registro Unico del Terzo Settore (RUNTS, Single Register of the Third Sector) with registry number 81178 since 22.11.2022, and in the Register of entities and associations that carry out activities in favour of immigrants, established at the Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali (Ministry of Labour and Social Policies) – first section of the Register under no. A/258/2003/VT – since 24.03.2003; moreover, the Association is registered in the List of Associations and Entities entitled to

take legal action supporting any person subject to racial or ethnic discrimination, pursuant to Article 5 of Decree-Law No. 215 of 9 July 2003, established at the Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri del Governo della Repubblica Italiana (Presidency of the Council of Ministers of the Government of the Italian Republic). Lastly, the Association is a member of other bodies, committees and councils such as:

- Consulta sulla Disabilità della Regione Lazio (Disability Council of the Lazio Region)
- Rete Scuole Migranti Roma e Provincia di Viterbo (Migrant Schools Network Rome and Province of Viterbo)
- Tavolo del Volontariato Sociale e Cittadini Stranieri presso la ASL di Viterbo (Table of Social Volunteers and Foreign Citizens at the Local Health Authority of Viterbo)
- Consiglio Territoriale per l'Immigrazione presso la Prefettura di Viterbo (Territorial Council for Immigration at the Prefecture of Viterbo)
- Consulta delle Associazioni di Volontariato presso il Comune di Tarquinia e di Viterbo (Council of Voluntary Associations at the Municipality of Tarquinia and Viterbo)
- CSV – Socia del Centro di Servizio per il Volontariato del Lazio (Centre of Service for Volunteering – Member of the Centre of Service for Volunteering of the Lazio Region)
- Progetto Memoria (Project Remembrance) – Association for the preservation and dissemination of the remembrance of persecutions and exterminations
- CIM – Confederazione Italiani nel Mondo (Confederation of Italians in the World)
- Congregazioni Missionarie Internazionali (International Missionary Congregations)

- Conventions: a) Institute of probation (Court of Civitavecchia); b) Community service (Court of Civitavecchia)

- The Association also works in the field of international cooperation through long-distance support of children, construction of schools, hospitals, shelters, clinics and canteens, aimed at guaranteeing the protection of fundamental rights. In developing countries, it organises health missions, providing specific medical care free-of-charge and contributing to the training of local staff. It operates in Romania, Dominican Republic, Cuba, Mexico, Peru, Democratic Republic of Congo and India, and in its eight Italian 'networks', including Rome.

- Semi di Pace's headquarters is 'La Cittadella' (The Citadel), a two-hectare state-owned complex on the outskirts of Tarquinia, in the province of Viterbo. La Cittadella includes the 'Parco della Pace' (Peace Park), an area dedicated to the memory of tragic events such as the Shoah and seafarer deaths, which includes two historical-artistic exhibitions: the 'Memoriale della Shoah' (Shoah Memorial) and the 'Memoriale del Migrante' (Migrant Memorial).

- The Association also founded the *Centro Internazionale di Studi sulla Pace e la Fraternità tra i Popoli – José Martí* (International Centre for the Study on Peace and Fraternity among Peoples – José Martí) in June 2022. This aims at promoting research, studies, seminar initiatives, conferences and advanced training courses on the study and promotion of the culture of peace, striving to rediscover, affirm and protect the constituent values of human relations through the mutual recognition of cultural, linguistic, religious, juridical and political differences, favouring a new 'Integral Humanism'.

- Specific activities carried out in and for Cuba by Semi di Pace

The relationship between Semi di Pace and Cuba began in July 1998, through collaboration with the Municipality of Jaruco when this was still incorporated in the province of La Habana, now the province of Mayabeque.

Over the years, the Association has carried out projects to support schools in the Municipality by sending educational and creative play materials, and to support the home for the elderly with routine maintenance work and donations.

Regarding health interventions, the Association supported the polyclinic by sending medicines, beds, sanitary equipment, mattresses, and hygiene products, given Cuba's inability to obtain supplies on foreign markets due to the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America, which has lasted over sixty years. It has intervened several times at the 'Juan Manuel Marquez' oncology paediatric hospital with animation activities for children.

The Association supported the 'Camilo Cienfuegos' school for disabled children and supported the home for pregnant mothers in Jaruco by providing medical supplies and food. It also collaborated with the Belen Community Centre in La Habana on activities for children and it has sent materials for manual workshops, sanitary equipment and educational materials to the Centre.

In 25 years of activity with Cuba, the Association has sent at least 10 containers of foodstuffs, medicines, hospital equipment, ambulance, equipment for family doctors, school buses, beds and mattresses, games, wheelchairs for the disabled, and personal protective equipment.

In addition to humanitarian aid, the Association has always provided its solidarity contribution and support to Cuba and the Cuban people also in institutional contexts aimed at lifting the economic, commercial and financial blockade.

2. SECOND PART: INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE HUMANITARIAN ASSOCIATION SEMI DI PACE FOR THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL (Fourth Cycle) FOR THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA

Semi di Pace is pleased to have the opportunity to express its contribution in the field of human rights on the presentation, scheduled for August 2023, of the Universal Periodic Review of the Republic of Cuba, a country with which the Association, as described earlier, boasts relations of friendship and solidarity that go back more than twenty years.

This, therefore, allows the Association to express an objective and truthful point of view on daily life in Cuba, given its role as a privileged observer, thus testifying to the considerable progress made by the country in the field of human rights.

Progress and Economic Development

- Cuba is advancing unceasingly in the direction of an ever greater and progressive recognition, affirmation and extension of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

maintaining a wide network of international cooperation despite the difficulties it continues to encounter due to the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on it for over sixty years, which hinders trade with foreign countries. The country has ratified 44 out of 61 international human rights documents. In addition to the blockade, the Association joins the international condemnation of Cuba's unjust inclusion in the list of States Sponsors of Terrorism, a unilateral decision that directly harms Cuban families and hinders the financial transactions of the country.

Cuba has all the characteristics to be a player on the international trade scene, if only the obstacles stemming from the aforementioned trade blockade were definitively removed. In spite of the blockade, the policy of '*abrir la puerta*' (opening the door) in the trade field has produced Law 118/2014 for the regulation of foreign investment in Cuba (Ley de la Inversión Extranjera n.118 of 28 March 2014), which has strongly innovated the previous legislation (Ley n. 77/1995), bringing domestic regulations closer to the main standards in use in countries representative of the world's main market economies.

According to this law, it can be affirmed that foreign investment in Cuba offers full legal security to investors, as the investments made cannot be expropriated, except for requirements of public utility or social interest, but always recognising, in such cases, full compensation on the basis of the previously established commercial value.

With the aim of increasing the commercial development of the country, together with the attraction of foreign investments and the establishment of foreign companies, the Zona Especial de Desarrollo de Mariel (ZEDM, Special Area of Development of Mariel) was created in 2013. Its organisation and administration are entrusted to the Oficina de la Zona Especial de Desarrollo Mariel (Office for the Special Area of Development of Mariel), which oversees the administering and controlling of the application of the Programa de Desarrollo y Negocios (Program for Development and Business), starting with the approved Ordenamiento Territorial y Urbano (Urban and Territorial Planning). The Oficina is considered a national body for all the purposes provided for in the founding legislation and is attached to the Council of Ministers, the body that approves its structure.

Political stability and the protection of the common good are a given, which can give Cuba an international prestige among the highest attained according to the social indicators of the most developed countries.

Having diplomatic relations with 195 countries and territories, being a member of many important economic bodies such as the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), testify to the active role the country plays in the world, not only in the 'regional' sphere.

As proof of this, it is worth noting that at the end of October 2020, the Eurasian Economic Union approved Cuba's request to join the organisation as an Observer State of the Region, contributing to the promotion and increase of trade alongside the application of measures aimed at eliminating barriers that negatively affect the development of trade and investment with the member countries of this organisation.

The high quality of the medical class and health sector meant that Cuba played an important role during the Covid-19 pandemic, proving to be one of the most active countries in the field of research into the anti-Covid-19 vaccine. The brigades of nurses and doctors who arrived in Italy to support Italian health workers during the most difficult period of the pandemic are still there, demonstrating that the values of solidarity and fraternity between peoples is a concrete fact for the Cuban people.

Participatory democracy

- With regard to the implementation of the principles of participatory democracy and respect for fundamental freedoms, while uniting the nation's political values and protecting the common good, there is no better indicator than the new Cuban Constitution of 2019 to attest to its recurrence and its application, which is by no means formal, also taking into account the introduction of the '*Código de Las Familias*' and other complementary laws, which also mark the country's advancement on the human rights front. The new Constitution of the Republic of Cuba dictates norms outlining the fundamental structure of the State, regulating the exercise of power, listing individual and collective rights and enunciating their guarantees.
- Although from a substantive point of view the highest political ruling force in society and in the State is the Communist Party of Cuba, this manifestation, while revealing a basic monist conception, nevertheless does not want to build an autocratic system, instead intending to give a democratic investiture to all the representative bodies of State power, configuring them as elective and renewable. Starting with the National Assembly of the *Poder Popular*, which is "the supreme body of the State. It represents all the people and expresses its sovereign will" (Article 102). The functions of this body are those of a representative parliamentary assembly, an indication, this, of a configuration of a democratic political system on an effective level, entirely in line with Western-based democracies.

The recognition of fundamental rights

- Like the democratic constitutions in force in the West, the Cuban Constitution also presents the Charter of Fundamental Rights, enunciating the content of individual and collective rights, establishing the guarantees for their enjoyment and manifesting the relationship between freedom and authority. In addition to the traditional civil and political rights, which have curves oriented towards the experience of their recent evolution, and the configuration of social rights, corresponding to the socialist model of society and institutions, there are openings for new generations of rights.
- A significant example is given by the recognition of the "right to life, physical and moral integrity", to "freedom", contextually integrated with the "right to justice, security, peace, health, education, culture, recreation, sport and their integral development", unifying all these rights as qualifying elements of the person's condition and expectations (Article 46).
- As for the symmetry between rights and duties, one may recall the right "to the free development" of the personality, which is matched by the duty to maintain "a conduct marked by respect, fraternity and solidarity" (Article 47). The underlying principles are the

affirmation that "human dignity is a supreme value that underpins the recognition and exercise of the rights and duties enshrined in the Constitution, treaties and laws" (Article 40), with the consequent recognition and guarantee of "human rights" (Article 41) and equality (Article 42), which are to be understood as integrated or interpreted also in accordance with what is provided for in international conventions on fundamental rights.

- The catalogue of constitutionally recognised fundamental rights continues with the indication of the inviolability of the home, correspondence and other forms of communication, as well as enunciating the collective rights of assembly, demonstration and association, albeit exercisable in compliance with public order and in accordance with the provisions of the law.
- Freedom of thought, conscience and expression is recognised, as is the right of everyone to profess or not to profess religious beliefs, to change them and to practise the religion they consider to be most in keeping with their spiritual needs. The individual aspects of religious freedom relate to the freedom of association and assembly, together with the institutional aspect, which concerns Churches and religious denominations and their relations with the State.

On this point, Semi di Pace can testify, given its decades of activity in Cuba, to the presence of interdenominational and confessional organisations of the main religions, from Catholic Christians to Protestants, Orthodox, Jews, Islam and Buddhism, including religions of African origin, an expression of religious and cultural syncretism.

- The presence of said rights and guarantees, which are widespread among the Cuban people, means that neither racism nor discrimination occurs, *i.e.*, the prevention strategy proves to be effective, also thanks to the '*Programa Nacional contra el racismo y la discriminación racial*' (National Plan against Racism and Racial Discrimination) approved in 2019, which established a special government commission headed by the President of the Republic.
- Particular attention is paid to Families, declined in the plural precisely to foster inclusion and gender equality, considered the "fundamental cell of society", but in a plural vision, in fact, "whatever their form of organisation", bearing in mind that their constitutive basis is the equal rights, duties and opportunities of its members. And these indicators are respected, on a concrete examination of the Cuban reality, as well as strengthened and better regulated by the recent '*Código de las Familias*' (Families Code), which recently came into force after extensive popular discussion and pronouncement.
- In particular, the *Código de las familias* guarantees the rights of people in vulnerable situations such as children, the disabled and the elderly, preventing situations of neglect from occurring to their detriment.

Semi di Pace can testify to the high value that the common good presents in Cuban society, as well as the effectiveness of values such as social solidarity being authentically practised among the population; values, these, appropriated and better guaranteed by the 2019 Constitution, which rightfully places Cuba in the dynamics of the most advanced constitutionalism.

Tarquinia (VT), 31.03.2023

The President
Professor Luca Bondi