

## The SKNCAA Universal Periodic Review (UPR)

1. Cuba has continued to face the harsh impacts of the blockade with its far reaching national extraterritorial applications imposed was reinforced by the United States of America which in itself is a policy that hampers Cuba's socio-economic development and comprises a conspicuous violation of the human rights of its people. Despite this dismal situation, the Cuba has continued to make progress in its economic and social development. Cuba has shown commitment to international human rights law by ratifying 44 of the 61 international human rights treaties. Cuba continues to uphold all of the fundamental conventions of International Labour Organization Convention that deals with the worst forms of child labour. In 2013, Cuba submitted to the Code of conduct to combat human trafficking thus complying with the United Nations (UN) Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.
2. The new Labour Code has allowed citizens the right to explore new forms of property management and work organization, this is due to the expansion of self-employment and cooperative partnership models. This in turn has facilitated protection for workers employed in non-State ventures and foreign capital. This saw a rapid rise in the number of alternative livelihood enterprises that includes;
  - Privately owned medium size businesses such as hostel, restaurants and bars,etc.
  - Privately owned small businesses for goods and services such as printeries, shops, Airbnb, etc.
3. Arising out of the 2016 legal ordinances, additional benefits were given with regards to maternity leave for working women with special Social Security schemes for maternity protection. The ordinances also established financial governance for female workers on maternity or sick leave as well as exempts them from the responsibility to contribute to the social security system.
4. Cuban law punishes all variations of person to person violence.

In 2016 a cooperation agreement was established between the Attorney General's Office and the Cuban Women's Federation that facilitated the use of an alternative channel in the form of a telephone hotline for reporting acts of violence against women. Coupled with this, continuous efforts are been made to promote a culture of non-violence throughout the population.
5. Cuba Not only protects the lives of its own citizens, it has, through international cooperation projects and assistance, helped to facilitate improvement the living

conditions and health of other peoples and nations. This is evident in the countless numbers and noteworthy impacts of health related missions conducted during the Ebola outbreak in Africa, earthquake recovery efforts in Haiti, the assistance given to nations during the Covid -19 pandemic. These events were being carried out at the same time hundreds of Cuban humanitarian medical brigades were deployed to strengthen the countless burdened healthcare systems around the world including the one here in St. Kitts and Nevis (SKN). In addition to this, the SKN health service has been enhanced tremendously with the addition of many Cuban-trained health professionals in different disciplines.

6. The Civil Defence System , in disaster situations, without regard to the cost, required resources and effort has worked to safeguard the property, life and health of the entire population. This has been evident in the case of the powerful hurricanes such as Ian in 2022 where levels of mortality has being very low. The Matanzas oil fire saw the immediate mobilisation of all available resources needed to combat this disaster that destroyed about 40% of the oil storage capacity. Cuba's humanitarian efforts manifested dividends in the form of the immense out-pour of support from the regional and international community during these difficult times. This is a testimony to the high esteem in which Cuba is held.
7. Cuba exercised their right to self governance by participation the March, 2023 election cycle, tat showed about 70% voter turn-out at the polls. This turn-out is said to be an increase over two previous cycles. Provisions were made so that both the public and private sector communities could participate in the electoral process with minimal disruption to their operational procedures.
8. In Cuba, Television, radio and other mass media facilitate access to truthful and timely information and enable the public to participate in the discussion of national and international affairs. In recent years, the use of the feedback mechanisms offered by different digital media platforms has grown, and this has increased the options available to the public to express and discuss their opinions on many different issues.

National commitment has been enhanced as persons are persistently encouraged

to participate directly in the design and implementation of policies and programmes that address the problems identified and in so doing they are actively monitoring governmental processes.

9. Cuba has continued to ensure that civil society organizations have broad powers and in a proactive capacity, as well as ability to consult, offer opinions and make decisions in the exercise of the participatory democracy afforded them the Constitution.

In light of this, some Cuban civil society organizations promote laws in favour of human rights. These proposals are assessed and discussed for approval by the National Assembly. For

example, the Cuban Women's Federation proposed and promoted amendments to the Act on Maternity Leave for Working Women in order to facilitate equal treatment for women and men as they exercise their right to participate in caring for their newborn children, with the guarantee of paid leave and job security. Similarly, the Confederation of Cuban Workers actively participated, along with other civil society organizations, in the preparation and discussion of the proposal for the Labour Code that is now in force.

10. Access to information through information and communication technologies (ICT) has become mainstream in Cuba. The development of information and communication technologies (ICT) has grown across the board, as has access to those technologies.

ICT have continued to expand in rural areas, including mountainous and hard-to-reach areas. In 2019, ETECSA began offering Internet connection via Cubacel mobile telephones which was increased with 4G. In March 2021, it was reported that 4G service had reached every municipality in the country.

On a warm night in January 2019, an unexpected tornado swept through several municipalities in Havana. In less than an hour it left a bleak landscape in its wake, with half a dozen dead, more than 20,000 people displaced, and some 10,000 homes affected, of which 3,000 were totally destroyed, and tens of millions of pesos in material losses. Just one month earlier, Cubans had been authorized to access the Internet through mobile data technology, sparking a small and silent revolution in Cuba. Since 2014, one could only access the Internet through fixed connections or on the Cuban telephone company's (ETECSA) WiFi networks.

The island experienced a citizen mobilization around those affected by the tornado, driven by smart-phones with newly acquired mobile data. The new communication facility first proffered images and then stories of what had happened, disseminated nationally and internationally. News and aid among neighbours and neighbourhoods flowed much earlier than through the official channels. For the first time in the streets of Havana, a teenage couple could film and upload videos to Facebook or YouTube.

The connection speed and mobility enabled Cubans not only to contact their relatives and friends abroad through social networks and messaging applications, but also to use information and communications technologies (ICTs) as tools for socialization and citizen solidarity. Donations to the affected neighbourhoods were managed through social networks, and thanks to 3G technology, the world witnessed it.

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This increased access to telecommunication technologies has greatly facilitated an enhanced link between the Cuba and the global community in real time. This has

vastly promoted meaningful socio-economic exchange with the Cuban people with less hassle and interference. This has improved family relationships and friendships significantly. All this has been achieved although major challenges remain owing to the high cost of technologies and the economic embargo, which, among other things, affects Cuba's growth and development.

11. Protection of the right to equality and non-discrimination has seen Cuba continuously fighting against all forms of discrimination through laws, policies and programmes. The Constitution recognizes the equality of all citizens and prohibits discrimination.

On September 25, 2022, Cuba approved a new Family Code in a referendum, repealing the one in place since 1975. This Code is the result of decades of debates, conflicts, and the processing of political, social, economic, and cultural understandings within Cuban society. The legislation recognizes the possibility of same-sex marriage and establishes the right of all people to adopt similar to places such as Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Uruguay. It includes provisions on gender and intra-family violence and establishes that all matters of discrimination and violence in the family demand urgent intervention. It affirms a wide range of rights and guarantees for people with disabilities and the elderly, including their right to decide where and with whom to live. It details care and protection provisions for minors in the case of divorce, separation, or disasters.

The Code also expressly prohibits discrimination based on identity and sexual orientation. It protects family ties not based on blood relations, such as adoptive and socio affective relationships, and grants multi-parental rights. In this way, the Code recognizes the diversity of existing families, including different forms of legal recognition (marriage or de facto union), and protects stepfathers, stepmothers, and cohabitants in the case of separation without divorce. In addition, it recognizes various economic agreements within marriage, prohibits child marriage (the minimum age is now 18 years), and offers guarantees to people serving as caretakers. In addition, therein is the recognition of the autonomy of children, which affirms the right of minors to be heard and protected in all their physical and emotional integrity.

12. The National Sexual Health and Education Programme, which is coordinated by the National Sex Education Centre of the Ministry of Public Health, has made it possible to develop an ongoing educational strategy to promote respect for freedom of sexual orientation and gender identity. The actions planned include educational strategies, promotion of academic work and scientific research, legal orientation services, sex therapy, care for LGBTI persons and victims of gender violence and child sexual abuse, development of community programmes and promotional audiovisual materials, as well as coordination of social networks, online discussions, campaigns to promote respect for freedom of sexual orientation.

13. Women enjoy full rights, on an equal footing with men, in regard to jobs and social security, in accordance with the legislation in force. Women receive equal pay for work of equal value; they have the right to own land and receive bank loans. They have access to free education and quality health services, as well as sexual and reproductive rights. Policies and programmes have been introduced to promote women's autonomy and their economic, social and political empowerment.

Women account for 60.5 per cent of graduates of higher education. They account for 67.2 per cent of technicians and professionals nationwide. They make up 49 per cent of the workforce in the civil service; more than 80 per cent of female workers have an intermediate and higher level of education. Women account for 48.6 per cent of leaders; 81.9 per cent of professors, teachers and scientists; 80 per cent of presidents of provincial courts, prosecutors, judges and professionals and of the workforce in the health and education sectors. Women represent 53.5 per cent of persons working in science, innovation and technology and over 64.2 per cent of cooperation personnel in countries around the world.

14. Care for the elderly is provided through three subprogrammes, i.e., at the institutional, hospital and community levels, especially the latter. This includes regular

health examinations at the family doctor's office; Senior's groups (social gatherings for the elderly);<sup>9</sup> the Seniors day centres,<sup>10</sup> training schools for caregivers, soup kitchens for families and university courses for older persons. Projects are carried out in conjunction with the World Food Programme (WFP) to provide support to this population group through its contribution to food security and nutrition, in particular through the strengthening of links between social protection systems and agricultural value chains.

Social workers are hired by the municipal offices of the Ministry of Labour to prepare meals and accompany these persons when they need to carry out activities outside of their home. Social services such as family care, at-home social assistance, payment for care in day centres and homes for the elderly enable older persons to develop their potential as fundamental actors in society.

15. To enable persons with disabilities the full and effective participation in their social environment, Cuba has implemented the National Plan of Action for Persons

with Disabilities, which is aimed at promoting, coordinating and implementing policies,

strategies, programmes and services that will ensure that they have a better quality of life and equal opportunities, integration and active participation in economic and social development.

Persons with disabilities enjoy the benefits of the free, universal and comprehensive National Health System. Specialized centres and highly qualified staff are available to meet their special needs.

Children with disabilities participate in all activities organized for children and adolescents and benefit from the same general protection to ensure their full development. They have unrestricted access to the free universal national education system, including special education for persons with some type of intellectual disability who need specialized care. The Ministry of Education is working to improve teacher training with a view to improving the quality of services for children with special educational needs. They are guaranteed access to devices to facilitate their participation in society, including individual devices such as cochlear implants and prostheses, optical aids, hearing aids, mobility aids and others.

Paralympic sports facilities have been improved with local and national structures, enabling Cuban athletes to place eighteenth in the Paralympic Games held in 2016.

A special effort has been made to provide access to information and communication technologies for persons with disabilities. Youth computer and electronics clubs carry out programmes for children with different types of disabilities, focusing on the creation of educational software and games.

16. In Cuba precedence is given to guarantee the right to food and food

security for the population. Policies are being implemented to guarantee the availability and access to adequate food. Basic food commodities are being made available at subsidized prices for the entire population, regardless of individual and family income or status. Measures have been made to improve the performance of the agriculture sector, achieve higher levels of local production, replace food imports, increase resilience in environmental situations, preserve ecological balance and create stronger linkages between the agriculture sector and the rest of the economy. In this regard in recent times more persons have been given access to land and inputs to facilitate the production process and enhance livelihoods and community well-being.

17. We the Cuban Alumni Association (CAA) sees that Cuba not only recognizes but also honours that persons has the right to health and education. Cuba has been providing technical cooperation in various areas. This cooperation has benefited the

most disadvantaged groups, including indigenous people, women and persons with disabilities in many developing countries. Since the beginning of the Cuban collaborative efforts, more than a million Cubans have extended their services and have made significant contributions in 186 countries. Cooperation in the health sector has been especially significant, given its humanitarian nature and the large-scale training of human resources.

18. It is important for us the CAA to note that Latin America, the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa have accounted for 87.3 per cent of the foreign graduates in Cuba over the years. This is clearly demonstrating Cuba's commitment to the socio-economic development of these states with limited resources and capacity. Here, to date, SKN has benefited tremendously with over 100 professionals graduated from Cuban universities in various disciplines such as medicine, agriculture, engineering fields just to name a few. In 2023, eight (8) persons received full scholarships to study various disciplines including specializations in the medical field. We the members of the CAA can testify to life in Cuban society that has moulded us into instruments of positive change where we can now be actively making significant contributions to the growth and development of our own country and its people in just about all aspects of life. Thanks to Cuba!

19. More than 1,740 Cuban education professionals provide their services in 17

countries of Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa. Presently here in SKN, there are eleven (11) Cuban professional collaborators giving fundamental contributions to our nation. The Cuban education system to its population has served to facilitate the smooth assimilation of its citizens into our local society as private citizens where they are not only able to elevate themselves and their families back home but to do so while meaningfully supporting the advancement of our communities.