

Emergency Resolution adopted by the EPP Congress, Bonn, 9-10 December 2009

Cuba

The European People's Party,

Whereas:

- the resolution on the situation in Cuba which was adopted at the Rome Congress in 2006 by the European People's Party (EPP);
- the resolution on the violation of human rights in Cuba which was adopted by the EPP on the 12th June 2006 as well as the EU's policy regarding human rights;
- the Council Common Position 96/697/CFSP, which was adopted on the 2nd December 1996 and has been periodically updated;
- the Human Rights Watch Report, "A new Castro, the same Cuba", released on the 18th November 2009;

The European People's Party expresses its great concern in view of the events detailed below:

According to data from the European Parliament, there are currently 208 political prisoners on the island. Those in jail are human rights activists, political opponents, intellectuals, librarians, independent journalists, Varela Project promoters and union members who were imprisoned simply for asking for the initiation of a democratic process on the island.

For the Cuban government, the problem of human rights does not exist in Cuba and there are no prisoners of conscience, only people imprisoned in compliance with Cuban legislation. However, the reality is very different. The organisation Human Rights Watch, in its report issued on 18th November, provided data and facts regarding the methods of repression that demonstrate the flagrant violation of civil and political human rights and of the fundamental freedoms of members of the Cuban democratic opposition.

Given this situation, we cannot remain indifferent when considering the visit made by the Spanish Foreign Minister, Miguel Angel Moratinos, to the island. During his visit no meetings were held with members of the democratic opposition, with his schedule limited to meetings with members of the Castro government. He did not give any messages of support to those fighting for freedom, nor did he denounce the repression that the civil society is subjected to.

The prisoners themselves issued a joint declaration condemning the visit of minister Moratinos and expressing their concern regarding the change of posture towards the regime, that is to say the change from the Common Position. They stated therein that: "We are concerned that the Spanish government seeks to propagate its contempt for democratic Cubans throughout the EU; in particular the desire of Mr Moratinos to scrap the 1996 Common Position". Further on they add: "We believe that the government of Spain must reconsider its current policy towards Cuba in accordance with the traditions and the will of its people".

Having had no contact with civil society whatsoever, the minister did not witness the true seriousness of the situation on the island and the lack of any reform process.

The position of Minister Moratinos and the Spanish socialist government with respect to Cuba is tendentious if we take into account the strategy towards Cuba adopted by the president of the United

States, Barack Obama, or the line established by the European Common Position regarding Cuba. It is difficult to understand how at a time when the policies of the United States and Europe through the Common Position appear to be converging on dialogue, the Spanish government does not engage in dialogue with Cuban civil society, but rather it limits itself to contact with the Castro regime. The prevailing idea is to establish a dialogue with both the civil society and the Cuban government.

Taking the above into consideration, the European People's Party:

1. Vindicates the validity of the Spirit of the Common European Position based on the defence of the fact that the critical dialogue with the Cuban regime must be linked to support for the democratic opposition of Cuba and for tangible changes leading to a peaceful transition to democracy.
2. Demands that the Cuban authorities release prisoners of conscience immediately.
3. Condemns visits by European political leaders that are limited to talks with the regime without visiting the democratic opposition.
4. Establishes a direct and constant dialogue between party members of the European People's Party and different civil society groups present in Cuba.
5. Mediates in creating a mechanism of dialogue between the civil society and the Cuban government, in which the different existing political positions are represented.
6. Reiterates the full force of the commitment and availability of our party members to listen to and to support Cuban society.
7. Condemns the restrictions on the right of opinion as shown by the arrests of signatories of the Varela Project all over Cuba during the last months. The Varela Project, an initiative for democratic and economic reform, was initiated by the Christian Democrat Oswaldo Payá who was awarded the Sacharov Price by the European Parliament for his promotion of democratic reforms.
8. Is especially concerned by the new trend of stopping dissidents by jailing them on contrived charges that are unrelated to the real motive of their imprisonment.
9. Expresses solidarity with fellow Christian Democrat Agustin Cervantes García who was tried in a summary trial with no preparation or access to defence and sentenced to two years of prison.