

## ***United in Hope***

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Results of the First Stage of the National Dialogue 2009

The people of Cuba want changes. That is why in January we called for a National Dialogue because it is we Cubans, without exception, who must define for ourselves the changes we need. This is only possible if citizens' rights are guaranteed so that they can participate fully in the shaping of these changes. Hundreds of Cubans and other members of civil society struggle peacefully for democracy and respect of Human Rights. We have worked for months in a first stage of this Dialogue, to complete this proposal of first steps needed to carry out changes. Now we present this proposal to all Cubans, without exception, living inside or outside the country, to all institutions and organizations and to the government of Cuba, to begin a new stage of Dialogue so that is truly National. This is how we commence a new stage of the National Dialogue with all Cubans who want to participate.

With or without the dialogue, all Cubans have a right to rights, because we are human beings. Thus, this National Dialogue is not meant to define whether or not Cubans are entitled to rights, but rather to agree on a peaceful path by which to implement the changes with dignity. The essence of real and just changes is to make the guarantee and exercise of all rights a reality. If the people want to take these and other steps to initiate the changes that they both want and need, they will have to express their peaceful will and call for them civically. The people do not have to keep waiting without hope, because there is hope, because changes are possible, and because we can create paths to carry them out. The government should respond to the will and the rights of the people and open now this stage of changes. In any case, if only the citizens can exercise their rights of expression, association and election, they can decide on the changes and carry them out. Because of this, the first steps that we propose are geared directly to give a voice to the people and rights to the citizens. Why not rights?

We entrust in God the intentions and hopes of the Cuban people. We present to each and every Cuban, this pre-proposal for

### ***The first steps for change.***

#### **I. Basic Statement**

The liberation – without exile – of political prisoners, and those who have been arrested for political reasons without having participated in acts of terrorism; the implementation of changes that guarantee to all Cubans – in law and in practice – liberty and the exercise of all universally recognized human rights, including the International Agreements signed by the Cuban government. This initial process of changes, in an atmosphere of reconciliation, should lead to free and democratic elections, affirming the national independence, sovereignty and self-determination of the Cuban people. The culmination of this path will be the creation of a constituent assembly.

## **II. Freedom of Expression, Religion, and Conscience**

**Statement 2.1** That freedom of religion and conscience – in law and in practice, and respecting the dignity of people – be guaranteed to everyone, and that everyone can freely express their ideas, feelings, criticisms, opinions, and proposals in both oral and written forms and in any peaceful way: in written news, radio, television, internet, artwork, and other mediums and through public demonstration.

**Statement 2.2** To create an integrated National Commission for members of the government and of the democratic opposition and other components of civil society – including representatives of the unions, churches and fraternities – that guarantees the right of access to mass media – with equal opportunity – for the opinions and ideas of all individual Cubans, political and civic groups, churches, fraternities, social organizations, and citizen’s groups.

**III. Freedom of Association:** The right to meet and associate freely should be guaranteed to people in political parties, electoral movements, associations, economic societies, private companies, unions, workers’ movements, institutions, social organizations, ecologists, professionals, religious people and of any kind, for the lawful purposes of life. This will be done through laws and procedures that facilitate their rapid legalization and permit their operation with true respect for pluralism and the diversity present in society.

## **IV. Free Elections**

**4.1. Electoral Law.** We will propose new electoral legislation that guarantees the exercise of popular sovereignty so that all voters can be nominated for all elected positions, directly by citizens, without candidacy review committees, and that they can freely and democratically elect all of their representatives for every position among the various candidates to each position.

**4.2 Electoral Commission.** That a new National Electoral Commission be made up of citizens proposed by the Government, the democratic opposition,

and other members of civil society. This Commission, apart from completing its own functions, will recommend the date to call for new elections in a timely fashion and with the supervision of international organizations.

**V. Freedom of Movement and National Reconciliation:** The law must guarantee all Cubans, professional or not, the freedom to travel, the right to leave and enter the country freely, and the right for those who live outside the country to return to live in Cuba, the native country and home of all Cubans. All involved governments must facilitate family reunification. They must not confiscate the homes or other goods of those who decide to leave the country. They must eliminate the category of “definite exit” and the requirement that Cubans ask permission to enter or leave the country. The old owners or occupants of homes and land cannot evict, either directly or through third parties, individuals or families from the homes in which they legally live for any reason or in any way. Current owners or occupants cannot be removed from the land their homes are in either, and old owners or occupants cannot demand from them any payment or penalty.

## **VI. Social and Economic Rights**

**6.1** The right to all health and education services, and all other existing services that are humanly just and necessary, must remain guaranteed and free of charge to all Cubans, without any exclusions or privileges and without political or ideological conditions. The right to religious education must also be recognized. Children and adolescents must be educated in love and liberty, offering them real opportunities to live freely in their own time and to build a better future for everyone.

**6.2** All laws, legal dispositions and practices must be abolished that discriminate – for whatever reason or condition – against Cubans in their own country or create disadvantages for Cubans compared to foreigners. Cubans from any part of the country will have the right to travel and live in any other part of the country, including the capital. The so-called frozen zones and restrictions that prevent citizens from freely changing their place of residence and homes without hurting the legitimate rights and interests of their families must be abolished.

**6.3** In light of recognizing all political, civil, labor, economic, religious, social and cultural citizen rights, the Penal Code must be transformed immediately, and citizen complaints of mistreatment or unjustly punishment due to the arbitrariness of authorities or the application of laws or articles that violate human rights must be reviewed.

**6.4** The right to unionize freely—in accordance with the approved agreements under the framework of the International Labor Organization (ILO)—must be

established. Salaries and pensions must allow for a dignified life. The right to hire workers freely and respect their rights must be guaranteed. Businesses that rent out the Cuban workforce to foreign companies and garnish much of their earnings must be eliminated.

**6.5** Laws must guarantee all Cubans the right to establish their own companies and private businesses, and to hire workers while respecting their rights. Self-employment with total freedom, and creating favorable conditions to do so, must be guaranteed as a right. Similarly, the creation of small and medium-sized businesses where Cubans can jointly develop their creativity, generate income and productive jobs, and help make the economy more flexible must be facilitated. A single national currency must be recovered for Cuba.

**6.6** Under the framework of an integral program of broad economic reforms that liberate productive actors, in the first stage, arable lands must be turned over to those interested in making them productive for their own benefit and for society. Bans and limitations within current legislation regarding turning over land for renting or leasing with the option of buying must be eliminated.

## **VII.** The Vision of the Future in this National Dialogue

- A process of deeper and more permanent institutional and economic transformations
- A new Constitution for a new era of our history that also upholds all the rights enjoyed by our people in the 1940 Constitution and in all other Constitutions
- The creation of a medium- to long-term national project
- The lessons of the past and new steps in the search for truth, justice and national reconciliation
- An integral program of conservation and salvation of the environment

...at a later stage of the same process, but already exercising all rights with full freedom and responsibility, with everyone and for the good of all, it is up to all Cubans to define, decide and build a free, more just and more human society, in brotherhood and peace.

The Organizers of the National Dialogue 2009

Cuba, June 16, 2009

