**Solidarity with Cuba following Hurricane Irma**

From 8-10 September 2017, Hurricane Irma, a category 5 storm devastated 800 kilometres of Cuba’s northern coastline.

It was the worst hurricane to hit the country in 100 years. Winds of 250km/h (156mph) and waves between 8-12 metres high have caused major damage to coastal communities, tourist resorts, agriculture and industry, taking out power and communication lines. The main tourist airport for the northern keys at Cayo Coco has also been destroyed, and 140,000 hectors of sugarcane plantations damaged or destroyed. Almost the entire country has been affected and the impact on the economy will be catastrophic.

Severe flooding in Havana and other towns has penetrated further inland than usual. Although one million people were evacuated, authorities reported that ten people had died, mainly as a result of collapsing buildings.

Despite the damage and chaos caused by Irma, Cuba has continued its commitment to humanitarian support for other countries, sending more than 750 Cuban health workers to other islands affected by Hurricane Irma.

We note that just as Irma was about to hit Cuba on 8 September, President Trump quietly extended the blockade for another year by signing the Trading with the Enemy Act. We recognise that the US blockade of Cuba, now in its 55th year causes ongoing hardship to the Cuban people and economy. Material support following Irma is vital, but political solidarity to end the US blockade of the country is just as important at this time.

This branch/region sends its solidarity to the Cuban people in the mammoth task they have ahead to rebuild their communities. We call once again for the US government to end its inhumane blockade of the country so that the Cuban people can access the building materials and equipment they will need to rebuild their country following this tragedy.

We commit to support hurricane relief efforts and continue to build solidarity with Cuba by:

1] supporting the Cuba Solidarity Campaign’s Hurricane Irma Appeal.

2] affiliating to and encouraging other branches to affiliate to the Cuba Solidarity Campaign