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HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

12 May 2021

The Honourable Joe Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

As Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Cuba in the British Parliament I would like to congratulate you on your election victory, and express my support for any change in US policy towards Cuba that will help build constructive relations and encourage dialogue and cooperation to benefit the citizens of both countries.

Together with 58 of my parliamentary colleagues I have signed Early Day Motion 1550 in the British Parliament which calls for international cooperation between Britain and Cuba, and supports the normalisation of relations between the United States and Cuba by removing the island from the US 'state sponsors of terrorism' list and ending the embargo.

This Parliamentary motion echoes the concerns raised in recent letters sent to you by Members of the European Parliament Friendship Group with Cuba and 80 Democrats in the House of Representatives; that measures imposed against Cuba during the Trump administration have caused unnecessary harm and suffering to Cuban families, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Under the presidency of Donald Trump, 242 new sanctions were introduced against Cuba, including the redesignation of the country as a "state sponsor of terrorism" – an action labelled as politicised and spurious by both US politicians, international observers and many former advisers to the Obama administration on Cuba policy.

The unjustified inclusion on the 'terrorism' list also prevents investment by foreign companies which has taken a severe toll on the livelihoods of ordinary Cuba citizens, including those trying to set up new businesses. In Cuba's most recent report to the United Nations it estimates that the US embargo and new measures cost the economy more than 5.5 billion dollars from April 2019 to March 2020 alone. This has impacted on living conditions, the availability of food, fuel and medicines – even preventing delivery of emergency COVID-19 medical aid during pandemic from third countries to Cuba.

Trump administration policies have also separated families by reducing visa applications and suspending commercial flights as well as prohibiting Cuban Americans and Cuban residents in other countries from sending remittances home to loved ones, and stopping US citizens from travelling to the island. These policies have caused suffering and distress to Cuban families on the island and Cuban American citizens across the United States.

I commend your pledge as a presidential candidate to reverse these Trump administration policies, and support Cuban families, especially in the areas of remittances, visas and family visits, and hope that you will take action as soon as possible to ease these cruel and punitive restrictions which are preventing families from reuniting and supporting each other. A humanitarian gesture such as this would be widely applauded and would undoubtedly improve the lives of many Cuban families.

On 23 June, the world will once again vote at the United Nations General Assembly on the Cuban resolution calling for an end to the US embargo. In the spirit of international cooperation I ask you to consider abstaining on the motion, as the United States did in 2016 when you were Vice President. This would demonstrate a clear break from the Trump era policy of confrontation and aggression – to one driven by humanitarianism, compassion and cooperation.

Our own experience in the UK is that cooperation and dialogue between the UK and Cuba has opened the door to constructive relations which have been beneficial to both parties, especially during the current global pandemic. In April 2020, Cuba provided safe docking for a COVID-19 stricken British cruise ship, the MS Braemar, and in August 2020 Cuban doctors provided medical support against the virus in British overseas territories, one of the 55 Cuban medical brigades working in 40 countries in the fight against COVID-19. For its own part, the UK has helped with training and provided scholarships for Cuban students to study in the UK. This cooperation builds on the successful visit of Prince Charles to Havana in 2019. Cuba is now looking to export vaccines, and in addition has developed several other pharmaceutical treatments which could benefit patients worldwide.

I believe that there are both practical and humanitarian reasons for the United States to work towards constructive bilateral relations with Cuba, especially as the world tries to 'build back better' after the pandemic, which together with the embargo and extra sanctions have caused innumerable damage and hardships for the Cuban people in the last four years.

The position taken by the United States at the United Nations General Assembly in June has the potential to send a clear message to the world that the Trump era policy on Cuba is ending, in favour on one looking to rebuild relations and open dialogue.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Morris', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Grahame Morris, M.P.

Cc: Linda Thomas-Greenfield, U.S Ambassador to the United Nations; Anthony Blinken, U.S Secretary of State; Her Excellency Yael Lempert, U.S Ambassador to the United Kingdom