15 April 2020

The Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP
First Secretary of State
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

Dear Foreign Secretary,

We are writing to ask the British government to join the growing international call for the US administration to temporarily suspend its blockade of Cuba during the global COVID-19 pandemic.

As of 13 April, Cuba has more than 700 confirmed cases of coronavirus and 21 people have died. Like Britain, the island’s health professionals are working hard to save the lives of its population. At the same time, the country faces shortages of medical equipment and medicines as a direct result of US policy. At the beginning of April, a consignment of coronavirus aid, including ventilators, masks and test kits provided by the Chinese Alibaba Foundation could not be delivered, as the freight company feared fines by the US Treasury Department.

Despite difficulties in obtaining medical equipment to fight COVID-19, Cuba has provided humanitarian support to many other countries during the crisis. The island has sent more than 700 doctors and nurses to seventeen countries including Italy, Andorra, St Lucia and Jamaica to support the overwhelmed health services in these nations.

In March, Cuba allowed the British cruise ship MS Braemar to dock so that infected passengers could be flown home. You will remember that you thanked the Cuban government for their assistance, stating in parliament that “we are very grateful to the Cuban government for swiftly enabling this operation and for their close cooperation to make sure it could be successful.”

On 2 April, Dr Anthony Stokes, British ambassador to Cuba, sent a letter expressing British thanks for the “great gesture of solidarity” by the 43 Cubans who had helped with the evacuation of the passengers and had just returned home safely after a 14-day quarantine period.

Michelle Bachelet, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and former president of Chile, stated in March that US sanctions “should be eased or suspended” as they limit countries’ ability to provide medical care and increase the risk that the virus will spread.

website: www.grahamemorrismp.co.uk
twitter: @grahamemorris
Spanish Foreign Minister Arancha González has also given Spain’s support to the call by the UN Secretary General for countries to be exempted from sanctions in order to receive humanitarian aid.

On 3 April, Josep Borrell, the EU’s high representative for foreign affairs, stressed “that sanctions should not impede the delivery of essential equipment and supplies necessary to fight the coronavirus and limit its spread worldwide.”

Several international public petitions have gained thousands of signatures in support of this call, including a UK-based open letter to the British government signed by almost 15,000 people.

We join these international calls for the US blockade to be temporarily suspended to allow humanitarian aid to be delivered. We ask that the British government joins other governments in making a public statement to this effect and raises it directly with US government counterparts.

Yours sincerely,

Grahame Morris MP
Chair, APPG Cuba

Dan Carden MP, Vice Chair
Kate Osborne MP, Vice Chair
Kim Johnson MP, Vice Chair
Paula Barker MP, Vice Chair
Alison Thewliss MP
Allan Dorans MP
Amy Callaghan MP
Andy McDonald MP
Apsana Begum MP
Bell Ribeiro-Addy MP
Beth Winter MP
Carol Monaghan MP

Jon Trickett MP
Kate Osamor MP
Kenny MacAskill MP
Kirsten Oswald MP
Kirsty Blackman MP
Lloyd Russell-Moyle MP
Margaret Ferrier MP
Marion Fellowes MP
Martyn Day MP
Mary Foy MP
Mick Whitley MP
Mike Amesbury MP
Chris Law MP
Chris Stephens MP
Claudia Webbe MP
Clive Lewis MP
Dave Doogan MP
Deidre Brock MP
Diane Abbott MP
Geraint Davies MP
Ian Byrne MP
Ian Lavery MP
Ian Mearns MP
Imran Hussain MP
Joanna Cherry MP
John McDonnell MP
John Nicholson MP
Mike Hill MP
Navendu Mishra MP
Olivia Blake MP
Owen Thompson MP
Peter Grant MP
Rachel Hopkins MP
Richard Burgon MP
Ronnie Cowan MP
Sam Tarry MP
Sarah Champion MP
Stephen Bonnar MP
Stephen Flynn MP
Tommy Sheppard MP
Yasmin Qureshi MP
Zarah Sultana MP