

Brussels and Havana, 19 May 2025

To the attention of Ms. Kaja Kallas  
High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy  
Vice-President of the European Commission

Subject: Request for a Review of the Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement (PDCA) between the European Union and Cuba

Madam High Representative,

On 6 May 2025, the European Parliament held a debate in Strasbourg on the applicability of the Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement (PDCA) between the European Union and the Republic of Cuba, in response to mounting concerns over the absence of democratic progress on the island and the persistence of serious human rights violations. During your remarks, you reaffirmed that the PDCA remains the central instrument of EU policy toward Cuba, notwithstanding critical interventions by numerous Members of the European Parliament and the expectations of Cuban civil society, which had hoped for a more robust assessment of the nature of the Cuban regime and its strategic alignment with the Russian Federation—including the security risks such an alliance poses for Europe.

Ahead of the upcoming EU-Cuba Joint Council, scheduled for early June and intended to determine the date, format, and priorities for the Human Rights Dialogue set to take place in Brussels this autumn, the undersigned Cuban civil society organizations and international allies wish to respectfully submit four recommendations we regard as essential to ensuring the credibility, integrity, and legitimacy of the process. We trust that these recommendations will receive full and thoughtful consideration from the European Commission and the European External Action Service, as we express our profound concern over the continued implementation of the PDCA in the absence of substantive reforms that would uphold the foundational principles of the agreement. This concern was previously conveyed to your office in a letter sent on 14 January 2025, which regrettably received no reply and which we now reiterate through this communication, strengthened by four concrete recommendations.

Should the European Union choose to maintain the PDCA as a valid framework, it is essential that meaningful changes be introduced in its execution. In its current form, the agreement fails to uphold the commitments enshrined in Articles 1.5 and 2 by systematically excluding independent civil society, impeding its meaningful participation, and tolerating practices that run counter to the very principles the agreement was designed to promote.

Article 1.5 affirms that respect for and the promotion of democratic principles, human rights, and the rule of law constitute essential elements of the agreement. This provision imposes an obligation on both parties to ensure effective conditions for participation, transparency, and public accountability. Yet, under current practice, the PDCA precludes official participation by independent civil society in the EU-Cuba Human Rights Dialogue, restricts their access to EU cooperation funds designated for the promotion of fundamental rights, and permits closed-door meetings whose stated purpose is to “avoid discomforting the regime.”

These practices also contradict Article 2, which defines as one of the agreement's core objectives the strengthening of democracy, human rights, and the inclusion of civil society as a legitimate and indispensable actor in the cooperation process. The situation is compounded by the absence of credible, transparent oversight and accountability mechanisms regarding the use of EU cooperation funds, which since 2016 have largely been channeled to state-affiliated entities—without sufficient safeguards to ensure that such resources are not used to reinforce structures and institutions that contravene the objectives of the agreement.

In this context, by accepting without contest the restrictive terms of implementation imposed by the Cuban authorities—terms grounded in a programmatically authoritarian constitutional and legal framework—EU institutions risk compromising the very democratic standards that underpin the Union's external action and international credibility.

The absence of corrective measures not only undermines the legitimacy of the PDCA itself but exposes the European Union to the reputational risk of association with a framework of cooperation that reproduces systemic opacity, exclusion, and repression—contrary to the values the EU has committed to uphold.

During the 6 May debate in the European Parliament, 11 of the 17 Members who took the floor called either for the suspension of the agreement or for a comprehensive review of its application. These statements—joined by the growing number of Member States calling for a reassessment of the EU's approach to Cuba—constitute a clear signal of the need to realign the Union's policy in a manner that is fully consistent with the rule of law, the protection of human rights, and support for democratic actors.

We therefore urge the High Representative, the European Commission, and the Council of the European Union to launch an immediate review of the current implementation of the PDCA. The EU's legitimacy as a global actor should not be tied to an instrument that marginalizes civil society, perpetuates exclusion and opacity, and weakens the normative foundation of EU cooperation in a context of sustained repression.

Within this framework, we respectfully call for the adoption of concrete measures that would ensure the EU's external action toward Cuba is fully aligned with its foundational values—democracy, the rule of law, participatory governance, and transparency—through the following priority actions:

1. Ensure the official and institutional inclusion of independent Cuban civil society in the EU-Cuba Human Rights Dialogue, guaranteeing their direct, meaningful, and sustained participation in accordance with the principles of the PDCA.
2. Conduct an urgent review of the eligibility criteria for EU cooperation funds, to ensure equal access for independent civil society organizations—without requiring adherence to Cuba's restrictive legal framework, which contravenes international standards on freedom of association.
3. Establish robust and transparent mechanisms for the monitoring, accountability, and auditing of EU cooperation funds disbursed in Cuba, in order to guarantee their use is fully aligned with EU principles of transparency and not allocated to entities complicit in state-led repression or propaganda.
4. End the practice of holding unofficial or unacknowledged meetings with representatives of independent civil society, and move toward a transparent, institutionalized engagement framework

consistent with the standards of legitimacy and democratic accountability that underpin the Union's foreign policy.

We respectfully reiterate our highest consideration, in the firm belief that under your leadership, the European Union will uphold the principles of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law that form the cornerstone of its international identity and moral authority.

We remain at your disposal for any further dialogue or engagement, and look forward to your thoughtful response.

With the highest esteem and respect,

Ciudadanía y Libertad

Asociación Sindical Independiente de Cuba (ASIC)

Cubalex

Iniciativa para la Investigación y la Incidencia A.C.

Fundación 4Métrica

Gobierno y Análisis Político AC (GAPAC)

Museo Virtual de la Memoria basada en Género (Museo V)

Mesa de Diálogo de la Juventud Cubana (MDJC)

Cuido60 – Observatory on Aging, Care and Rights

Alas Tensas Gender Observatory

Food Monitor Program

Cuban-European Forum for Human Rights

Coalición de Mujeres x Cuba Libre

Red Femenina Cuba

ODV Democrazia e Libertà

Cuban Confederation for Anti-Totalitarianism and Democracy

Cubans for Progress and Integration in Valencia

Movimiento 11 de Julio Portugal

International Institute on Race, Equality and Human Rights

Civil Rights Defenders

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MUSEO V



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