Council decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the European Union, of the Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Cuba, of the other

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The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted an own-initiative report by Elena VALENCIANO (S&D, ES) containing a motion for a non-legislative resolution on the draft Council decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the European Union, of the Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Cuba, of the other part.

Members welcomed the signing in Brussels, on 12 December 2016, of the Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement (PDCA) between the EU and Cuba. They considered that it constitutes an instrument that will offer a new framework for relations between the **EU and Cuba**.

Human Rights: Members reiterated that the EU's policy towards Cuba include the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and facilitating the economic and social modernisation aimed at improving the living standards of the Cuban population.

The report stressed that the Agreement should contribute to improving the **living conditions and social rights of Cuban citizens**. Consequently, Cuba is urged to:

- **ratify the United Nations' human rights conventions** which are still pending, more specifically the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;
- **align its human rights policy with the international standards** defined in the charters, declarations and international instruments to which Cuba is a signatory.

Members recalled that the Agreement includes a **provision for the suspension of the agreement** in the event of a violation of the provisions on human rights.

Furthermore, the report stressed the need for **civil society** to be a leading player in all areas of this Agreement and that the government should take further steps to foster uncensored access and improve the digital rights of the population.

Measures having extraterritorial effects: Members called for the lifting of the United States' economic blockade of the island and of the laws and unilateral measures accompanying it, particularly those with extraterritorial effects, since they restrict Cuba's economic activity and continue to have a widespread impact on the Cuban population. They condemned the imposition of extraterritorial sanctions on European undertakings for trading with Cuba.

According to Members, the Agreement can contribute to the **reform, adjustment and modernisation processes** already being proposed in Cuba, in particular with regard to the diversification of Cuba's international partners and the establishment of a general framework of political and economic

development. They urged the European institutions and the Member States to assist the economic and political transition in Cuba.

Trade: Members reiterated that the Agreement provides a platform for expanding the **bilateral trade** and investment relationship.

Cuba is invited to ratify and comply with the regulations of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the Decent Work Agenda, and to proscribe all forms of labour exploitation. In this context, the report noted that all workers need to enjoy a core set of labour rights as well as adequate social protection.

As a member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), Cuba is called on to ratify the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement that entered into force in February 2017. Moreover, **customs cooperation** is a crucial area that needs to be developed in order to address important challenges such as border security, public health, the protection of geographical indications, the fight against counterfeit goods and the fight against terrorism.

The Commission is invited to create **ad-hoc trade desks** in order to exchange best practices and provide Cuban exporters with the knowledge required to improve the access of goods onto the EU market.

Lastly, Members considered that the country's situation as a developing island state and the economic circumstances it is facing, which are exacerbated by the adverse impact of unilateral coercive measures, justify the adoption of measures that will enable **EU assistance to Cuba to be continued**, under the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI).