Relations between the European Union/Cuba

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The report by Mr STANLEY NEWENS (PSE, UK) on relations between the EU and Cuba was adopted, with 37 votes in favour, 7 against and 2 abstentions. The committee thus gave its support to dialogue with Cuba. Dialogue was in fact: - "the most positive means of encouraging evolution" in Cuba towards the achievement of those political and economic changes which would enable the country to fully integrate itself into the international community, - the element which would allow "a contractual framework to be established" which was compatible with EU doctrine on cooperation, respect for human rights and democracy. To support the process of democratisation in Cuba at all levels, the committee's resolution proposed: - increasing "humanitarian and food aid" and stepping up projects to support the reforms being implemented; - paying special attention to "the development of Cuban civil society" by supporting the work of NGOs and favouring their international contacts; - regularising the "legal status of NGOs" working in Cuba in the interest of making their work more efficient; - calling on the Member States to consider measures to reduce or cancel the debt which Cuba owed them; - calling on the Commission to "provide Cuba with technical assistance" in introducing new institutional and structural measures. However, other international measures were also necessary. As a result, the committee called upon the United States authorities "to end completely the economic embargo against Cuba" and to no longer impose penalties on companies trading with Cuba. The committee clearly wished the EU to contribute to the improvement of the situation in Cuba. Nevertheless, Members felt that Cuba needed to make a firm commitment to democratic reform: - Cuba should take "decisive steps" towards the democratisation of its political system, beginning with the "release of all prisoners of conscience"; - the "Cuban Penal Code" should be reformed; - Cuba should recognise the rights of Cuban workers to exercise their right to strike, to set up independent trade unions and to enter into direct relations with employers; - European companies should be guaranteed the right to develop legitimate trading relations and to conduct business operations in Cuba with Cuban partners; - there should be "equal treatment of Cuban businessmen" and foreign businessmen when staff were being taken on.