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**REPUBLIC OF KENYA**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**NINTH PARLIAMENT-FOURTH**

**SESSION**

**DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE NO. H**

**ON DEFENCE AND FOREIGN RELATIONS**

**REPORT OF THE STUDY VISIT TO THE**

**SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF CUBA**

**February 08 – 16, 2005**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**  
**PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS,**  
**NAIROBI**

**May 2005**

KENYA NATIONAL ASSEMBLY  
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## **INTRODUCTION**

**Mr. Speaker Sir,**

1 The Departmental Committee on Defence and Foreign Relations was constituted at the commencement of the Ninth (9<sup>th</sup>) Parliament pursuant to provisions of Standing Orders 151. The Committee has executed its mandate in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 151 (4), from which it draws its mandate to-

- i. investigate, inquire into and report on all matters relating to the mandate, management, activities, administration, operations and estimates of the assigned Ministries and Departments;
- ii. study the programme and policy objectives of the Ministries and Departments and the effectiveness for the implementation;
- iii. study and review all legislation after First Reading subject to the exemptions under Standing Order 101 A (4);
- iv. study, assess and analyse the relative success of the Ministries and Departments as measured by the results obtained as compared with its stated objectives;
- v. investigate and inquire into all matters relating to the assigned Ministries and Departments as they deem necessary as may be referred to them by the House or a Minister ; and
- vi. make reports and recommendations to the House as often as possible including recommendations of proposed legislation.

2 The Committee oversees the following Ministries and Departments:-

- i. Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- ii. Ministry for East Africa and Regional Cooperation,
- iii. Department of Defence

3 The Committee comprises the following Members:-

The Hon. G. G. Kariuki, EGH MP – Chairperson.  
The Hon. Suleiman R. Shakombo, MP,  
The Hon. Nyiva W. Mwendwa, MP  
The Hon. Kirugi L. M' Mukindia, MP  
The Hon. (Rtd) Maj. Marsden H. Madoka, MP

The Hon. Samuel L. Poghisiu, MP  
The Hon. (Rtd) Gen Joseph Nkaissery, MP  
The Hon. Mwandawiro Mghanga, MP  
The Hon. Njoki S. Ndung'u, MP  
The Hon. Daniel L. Khamasi, MP

**Mr. Speaker Sir,**

- 4 Six Members of the Committee accompanied by one officer visited the Republic of Cuba, between February 8 and 16, 2005. The objectives of the visit include-
1. to follow up on the progress made with regard to the Joint commission signed between Kenya and Cuba, as well as visits on various dates last year by the Ministers for Planning and National Development, Sports, Gender, Culture and Social Services and the Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs.
  2. to identifying potential areas of bilateral cooperation and strengthening bilateral ties between Kenya and Cuba;
  3. to forge and strengthen solidarity amongst Parliamentarians and peoples of the two countries;
  4. to share ideas, experiences and lessons learnt in the development history of the two states.
- 5 The delegation comprised of the following:-
- The Hon. G. G. Kariuki, EGH MP – Chairperson & Leader of the delegation  
The Hon. Suleiman R. Shakombo, MP,  
The Hon. Kirugi L. M' Mukindia, MP  
The Hon. Nyiva W. Mwendwa, MP.  
The Hon. Daniel L. Khamasi, MP  
The Hon. Mwandawiro Mghanga, MP.  
Mr. Njenga Njuguna – Secretary to the delegation.
- 6 The delegation had a successful visit during which they held meetings and discussions with high-ranking officers of the government and Parliament including, the Speaker of the National Assembly of the Peoples' Power, Hon Ricardo Alarcón De Quesada, Ministers, Members of Parliament, among others.
- 7 The Committee is grateful to the Speaker and the Liaison Committee for authorizing the visit, as well as the office of the Clerk for providing the necessary logistical and technical support. The Committee would also wish to thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Embassy of Cuban in Kenya; the staff of the Kenya High Commission in Canada wherein Cuba is accredited for all the

support and technical assistance given before and during the study visit.

**Mr. Speaker Sir,**

8 On behalf of the Committee, I now wish to present to the House, the Report on the visit to Cuba, pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 162.

**Hon. G. G. Kariuki, EGH MP**

**Chairperson, Departmental Committee No -H- on Defence and Foreign Relations**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### Overview of the Republic of Cuba

- 9 Cuba is the largest island in the Caribbean in terms of both size (110,860 sq. km) and population estimated at 11.3 million. It is located between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, 150 kilometers from Key West, Florida, USA. Spanish is the official language while Christianity is the dominant religion. Cuba has survived more than 40 years of US sanctions intended to topple the government of President Fidel Castro. It has also defied predictions that it would not withstand the collapse of its main mentor, the Soviet Union. Since the fall of the US backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista in 1959, Cuba has been a one party state led by President Castro, who exercises control over virtually all aspects of life through the Communist party and its affiliated mass organisations, the government bureaucracy and the state security apparatus. Cuba is a socialist state, which means the state discourages social classes by providing basic needs for all citizens. For instance, education up to university and healthcare are provided free. Literacy levels in Cuba are over 97%. There are 64 Universities.
- 10 The key objectives of the visit included:
- I. Following up on the progress made with regard to the Joint commission signed between Kenya and Cuba, as well as visits on various dates last year by the respective Ministers for Planning and National Development, Sports, Gender, Culture and Social Services and the Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs.
  - II. Identifying potential areas of bilateral cooperation and strengthening bilateral ties between Kenya and Cuba;
  - III. Forging and strengthening solidarity amongst Parliamentarians and peoples of the two countries;
  - IV. Sharing ideas, experiences and lessons learnt in the development history of the two states.
- 11 During the visit, the delegation held meetings with a number of key Government officials including:
- The Speaker (President) of the National Assembly of People's Power
  - The Minister of State,

- Deputy Ministers responsible for Education, Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Foreign Investments;
- Standing Committees on Defence and International Relations of the National Assembly of the People's Power

12 The delegation was also conducted on a tour of various institutions among them-

- a. the Museum of Revolution;
- b. the National Centre of Scientific Research;
- c. the Jose Marti Memorial Library;
- d. school of Social Workers; the International School of Physical Education and Sports where eight (8) Kenyans on the Cuban scholarships, are studying various sports disciplines;
- e. the Polyclinic (medical Health Institutions) in Managua
- f. the Second Front Frank Pais Primary School Managua, which has 300 pupils;
- g. an International Book Fair and an inspection of the tourist facilities at Varadero Beach.

13 The delegation further held fruitful discussions with the Department of International Relations of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba led by Mr. Fernando R. Estenez and the Vice President of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with Peoples Mr. Enrique Roman. There upon, the delegation noted the following aspects:

- i. the Cuban National Leadership is focused, inspiring and fore-sighted, caring and committed to the well being of their people.
- ii. Cuban people are very patriotic and united in their support of the Revolution, despite the hardships occasioned by the economic, commercial and financial blockade put in place in the last 44 years; an educated mass has been the driving force of the Revolution.
- iii. education is universal and free up to University; there are 64 universities, over 380,000 students and 24,000 lecturers. For every 14 persons, one is a university graduate; education in Cuba is highly regarded by UNESCO as ranking among the ten best in the world and the system is meant to make one whole and useful to the society.
- iv. health care is provided free to all citizens; including expert consultations, medicine and hospitalization; great strides have been made in medical scientific research, for instance, the delegation was informed that the country

- has eliminated malaria and is now at an advanced stage of developing a vaccine for cholera, cancer and HIV/AIDS.
- v. rational use of available resources based on national priorities is a central focus of the Government; corruption and misuse of resources is negligible and leaders serve as models of humility; government procurement of services and products is centralized (and not by individual Ministries)
  - vi. Cuba has achieved its current social-economic status without the support of international financial institutions e.g. the World Bank/International Monetary Fund; thus these bodies have no influence over Cuba's monetary policy
  - vii. Cuba's economic growth averages 5% per annum and there are no distinct social groups i.e. there are no absolute poor or very wealthy person as the government guarantees access to basic needs for all citizens; the government clearly discourages social and economic stratification, unlike capitalist societies that are founded on inequalities symbolized by a pyramidal social structure;
  - viii. there is a wide disconnect between the reality in Cuba and the reports broadcast on major world media on the state of the economy, governance and life; although the Communist Party of Cuba is the only political party, with an average of 900,000 members, not all Members of Parliament are members of the party.
  - ix. Cuba has a unicameral National Assembly of the People's Power that has 609 seats. Parliamentarians in Cuba are not paid any salary; they are volunteers who are engaged in other professional careers elected by the people as representatives to advocate for their views and interests in the national government; election of Members of Parliament is considered a big honour and duty to serve the people and the country; the same is the case for municipal leaders (Councilors); for the duration of the visit no manifestation of abuse of human rights and poor governance as normally alleged in major news network in the world came to the attention of the delegation.
  - x. over the last decade or so (since 1992) the UN General Assembly has overwhelmingly voted for the lifting of the financial, economic and commercial blockade imposed on Cuba since 1959; Kenya has been abstaining whenever such a vote takes place; given the global political and economic situation, this is no longer tenable and Kenya may have to decide on what best serves its interests;

- xi. the delegation learnt that unemployment is around 3%
- xii. Cuba has a vision to transform prisons into learning institutions. Two years ago, the government embarked on a pilot comprehensive programme to address problems affecting the youth, particularly the unemployed whereby the out-of-job youths are motivated to go for skills training through payment of modest allowance, based on one's level of education/training attained; the programme aims at assisting social delinquents to blend with societal norms and expectation; trained social workers are implementing the project in which prisons are turned into educational institutions to train the youth on various disciplines; they work closely with other government agencies such as Education, Health, and Universities in the training and rehabilitation of prisoners.
- xiii. since the youth are the embodiment of a country's future, adequate resources are expended to educate, train and offer them opportunities for employment, recreation and sport, to keep them off anti-social activities and thus a healthy responsible society.

### **Recommendations**

14 The Committee recommends that:-

- (i) the Minister for Education should urgently consider honoring the standing invitation by the Government of Cuba to visit the country to explore areas in which there are possibilities of joint cooperation in education sector, to learn and exchange ideas on the ways and means to strengthen free education system in Kenya;
- (ii) the Government, particularly the Ministry of Health should pursue opportunities for cooperation between health research institutes and universities with Cuba, to develop joint research programmes for common ailments in Kenya such as Malaria, AIDS, and Tuberculosis;
- (iii) the Minister for Health should urgently consider honouring the standing invitation of Joint Cooperation in Health issues for the mutual benefit of the peoples of the two states; along side this, the Ministry may consider the possibilities of having Cuban health brigades sent to Kenya to cover up for the shortages of medical health personnel in the country.
- (iv) Kenyans and the Government must learn to live within their means and cut down on donor dependency by investing in social development programmes.
- (vi) the Government should consider voting for the lifting of the blockade against Cuba, at the UN General Assembly;



similarly, it should strongly support Cuba whenever the issue of the country's Human Rights Record comes up for review in the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE GOVERNMENT OF CUBA**

### **Executive Branch**

- 15 President Fidel Castro is the Head of State and Government since 1976 when the post of Prime Minister was constitutionally abolished. Gen. Raul Castro Ruz is the First Vice President of the Council of State and First Vice President of the Council of Ministers since December 1976. The Cabinet or Council of Ministers is proposed by the President of the Council of State and appointed by the National Assembly, or the 31- Member Council of State, elected by the Assembly to act on its behalf when it is not in session.
- 16 The National Assembly elects the President and Vice President for a term of five years (elections were last held on March 6, 2003 in which President Castro and Vice President Raul Castro were re-elected by 100 %. The next elections are due in March 2008.

### **Legislature**

- 17 Cuba has a unicameral National Assembly of People's Power (*Asemblea Nacional Del Poder Popular-PCC*) that has 609 seats. Members are elected directly from slates approved by special candidacy commissions for five-year terms. The elections were last held on January 19, 2003 in which the PCC got 97.6% of the votes hence all the 609 seats in the House. The next elections are due in 2008. Members of Parliament in Cuba are not paid a salary, but rather, they are 'volunteers' paid in their respective professions.

## **MEETING WITH HIS EXCELLENCY AMB. P. N. RATENG' OGEGO, HIGH COMMISSIONER, KENYA HIGH COMMISSION, CANADA & CUBA**

- 18 Ambassador Ogego welcomed Members in Havana and informed the delegation that Kenya High Commission in Ottawa Canada is accredited to Cuba. He lauded the Members for the visit and pointed out that, there exist many areas of potential cooperation for the mutual benefit of the peoples of the two states, particularly, Education, Health, Information Technology (IT), Sports, Agriculture, and Research among others.

- 19 He added that Cuba's development experience and history is very much similar to Kenya in certain respects. For instance, the travel advisories against travel to Kenya by USA government can be equated to the ongoing economic, financial and commercial blockade against Cuba. The High Commissioner indicated that among areas of cooperation between the two countries where Kenya could negotiate with the government of Cuba include:
- i. Additional scholarships (Kenya currently has 29 students in various Cuban institutions);
  - ii. Developing an exchange programme for trainers from both countries;
  - iii. Cuban doctors' brigade where medical specialists could be sent to Kenya's medical facilities, particularly in the rural areas.
- 20 He informed the Members that Cubans generally take as their moral duty and responsibility to assist and liberate Africans, and that they are highly educated, widely exposed and skilled people who can help with some other the development issues/challenges facing Kenyans.
- 21 The High Commissioner told the Members that Cuba needs Kenya's political support in its struggle to have the US blockade lifted, especially given the fact that Kenya now has a representative in the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva, Switzerland. He pointed out that the UN General Assembly has over the last decade overwhelmingly voted for the removal of the blockade with the only exception being USA and two of its key allies.
- 22 During this period, the Kenya Government has always abstained from voting. He was of the opinion that the Government should henceforth cast a vote for Cuba to have the blockade lifted, given that the powerful western states always takes for granted developing country's real interests and aspirations. This will also mark a big step of solidarity with the people of Cuba.
- 23 The High Commissioner also stated that the Government of Cuba has sent out a standing invitation to Kenya's Ministers respectively responsible for Education and Health, which are yet to be honoured.
- 24 Amb Rateng' hosted a cocktail reception in honour of the delegation at the Hotel *Nacional* which was attended by senior Cuban Government officials including the Speaker, the Minister for

Foreign Affairs and 16 diplomats representing various African missions in Havana.

### **Recommendations**

25 The Committee concurred with views expressed by the High Commissioner – Rateng’ Ogego and therefore recommends that:-

- i. **the Government should consider voting in the UN in favour of lifting the blockade against Cuba, as a sign of solidarity with the people of Cuba;**
- ii. **the Government should seriously strengthen the Joint Commission and diligently implement the signed protocols between the two countries, for our mutual benefit;**
- iii. **the Ministers responsible for Education and Health should honour the invitations to Cuba, with a view to exploring possible areas of bilateral cooperation in their respective dockets for the mutual benefit of the two countries.**
- iv. **the Government should establish a Foreign Affairs Institute to offer all-round training (country specific) to newly appointed diplomats, for at least a year. The training should provide exposure to new officers in the operations of key institutions such as Parliament, Kenya Revenue Authority, higher education and research institutions, Tourist facilities among others to enable them effectively market the country.**
- v. **the Government should also facilitate regular refresher courses for middle and senior management staff in Foreign Service especially after an officer’s tour of duty. Indeed, the Kenya Institute of Administration could be contracted to undertake this as a strategy to espouse new government policies.**
- vi. **the Government should establish a strategic (think-tank) office within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to study, analyze and advise it on how to take advantage of changing dynamics in the regional, continental or global geo-politics and economic trends.**

### **JOINT MEETING WITH COMMITTEES ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND DEFENCE OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PEOPLE’S POWER- CUBA**

26 The delegation held a joint meeting with Representatives of both the Standing Committees on Foreign Affairs and Defence, led by Hon. Ramon Pezferro and Hary Villegas, Chairman and Deputy

Chairman respectively. They were accompanied by Hon. Genesis Izquier, the Secretary to the Standing Committee on Defence, and Mr. Silvio Castro, an official of the Committee of Foreign Affairs in charge of Relations with African-Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries.

- 27 The Chairman/Leader of the delegation introduced the Members and gave a brief on the operations and mandate of the Committee. He stated that the objective of the visit was to follow up on the implementation of protocols signed by several Cabinet Ministers from Kenya with regard to the Joint Commission between the two countries. In addition, the delegation was keen on learning, sharing experiences and ideas with their Cuban counterparts. He added that Kenyans greatly admire Cuban people's courage and long struggle against US blockade, and the effort to support the African struggle for liberation from colonialism e.g. Angola, Mozambique etc. He pointed out that contrary to news broadcast by major world media from the West, Cuba had instituted its own homegrown democratic governance style and structures where the people effectively participate in making decisions.
- 28 He observed that Cuba offers African Countries useful lessons on independence, patriotism, Education, Health, strong focused and committed leadership. He thanked the Cuba Government for offering Kenya students education/training scholarships. He invited Members of the two committees to consider visiting Kenya.
- 29 On their part, Committee Members from Cuba informed the delegation that Cuba has a history of struggling and that the people's participation has been the driving and decisive factor under the guidance of Cuba's national hero Jose Marti. His teachings and example centred on the belief that for people to be really free, they need to be educated and enlightened, given basic needs and opportunities to all. They stated that unlike western democracies which are based on inequalities, imbalances and numerous contradictions, Cuba's democratic practices responds to the real felt needs of the people (socially, economically and politically) and is highly representative and not exploitative.
- 30 The delegation was informed that in Cuba, the staff of the armed forces are not excluded in parliamentary involvement, hence many sitting parliamentarians are members of staff of the military e.g. the Chairman of the Defence Committee is a General in the armed forces/elected in a municipality. Similarly, the Vice Chairman is an officer in the Interior Ministry. In addition, the delegation learnt that in Cuba, the first duty of every citizen is defending the

Revolution. People are highly well - informed and organized to defend the gains of the 1959 Revolution. Any Leader's responsibility is to defend the people and their felt needs/interests. The delegation was further informed that Cuba had several enemies, especially the USA, but the people are highly sensitized and willing to sacrifice to counter such threats, as they are organized into brigade & militias for the Defence of the Revolution. The secret for fighting imperialism is unity, shared clear vision, selflessness and commitment.

- 31 The Cuban Legislators further told the Members that people in Cuba are unique and possibly different from other countries including Kenya. They are patriotic, united, patient, educated, disciplined and committed to the struggle for making the world a better place. They indicated to the delegation that a Member of Parliament in Cuba does not get a salary per se (gets from one's professional duty elsewhere). One rather volunteers to serve upon election as the Peoples' Representative (Deputies). As Deputies, their parliamentary responsibility goes on a round the year, but there are also informal activities where they are engaged. For instance, one of the roles of the Parliamentary Committee on Defence is to give reports on security and Defence issues to the people in a parliamentary-like session in the constituencies.
- 32 The delegation noted that there is clear need for the two governments to strengthen bilateral ties to implement signed protocols under the Joint Commission as a matter of urgency.

**MEETING WITH HON. EDUARDO CRUZ, DEPUTY MINISTER FOR HIGHER EDUCATION**

- 34 The Deputy Minister welcomed the delegation, and explained that Cubans have a deep sense of attachment to Africa, since the period of slavery and that many Africans descendants were part of the independence struggle against Spanish rule in Cuba. He stated many Cubans have been involved in African liberation, as sign of moral gratitude for African's struggle and suffering.
- 35 He informed the delegation that at least 12,000 Africans have been trained or under-going training in various institutions of higher learning free of charge. He was categorical that unlike in the Western Countries where students have to pay dearly and than get brain washed to the values of individualism and materialism, the students in Cuba are on scholarships and are inculcated with values of selflessness, humility and service to the people especially in remote regions. All students trained in Cuba are firmly

encouraged to go back home and help the societies they came from.

- 36 The Deputy Minister further informed the Committee Members that during the time of the 1959 Revolution in Cuba, there were only three (3) universities with 15,000 students. Presently, there are 64 Universities with a round 400,000 students and 24,000 lecturers i.e. for every 14 people one is a university graduate. Emphasis is given to science and technical training programmes. Education in Cuba is designed to make a learner wholesome and useful to society and is modeled on principles of social justice, to address the imbalances in society – essence of the Revolution in Cuba. He stated that a university is meant to be established in every municipality in Cuba and in most cases share facilities with schools.
- 37 The Committee Members heard that one of Cuba's national characteristic is to learn from others, but develop own capacity of producing knowledge and technical expertise i.e. for one advisor (foreign), to train two or three others in Cuba. This is meant to enhance local capacity and cut out dependency on others. He mentioned that Cuba has been under USA blockade for the last 44 years, yet despite this, its scientific technology is superb, and some USA firms and individuals are traveling to Cuba to seek treatment or purchase medication such as the vaccine on cancer currently under trial.
- 38 He informed the Committee Members that Cuba is interested in developing African people's capacity and technological base through transfers. He cited countries like Angola, Mozambique Sao Tome and Uganda that have Cuban instructors. He mentioned that the Cuban Minister for Education will soon tour several African countries amongst them South Africa, Angola, Tanzania, Sao Tome, Ethiopia and Mozambique. In that regard, the delegation urged him to convey an invitation to the Minister to include Kenya in his itinerary. The Deputy Minister stated that Cuba expects a Kenyan Education delegation to visit Havana soon.
- 39 The Deputy Minister stated that the colonial legacy made it very difficult for developing countries to link, due to poor and unfavorable transport linkages e.g. air transport where routing has to through western capitals. He expressed hope that the delegation would convey the interests of Cubans to work closely with Kenyan Universities and other institutions of higher education and research and on academic exchange programmes.

- 40 Responding to a question on how the Cuba Government manages to finance free education up to university level, the Deputy Minister explained that Cuba has shown that Education provision is not dependent on a country's GDP, but the social model chosen. In addition, he stated that there is hardly any corruption in Cuba, unlike other countries, where about 40% of the budget is stolen/looted. He added that the Cuban Government buys centrally, and not by individual Ministries, hence reduction of costs of operation. For instance, procurement of computers from China was done cheaply as they were purchased centrally as a block. He stated that it is cheaper to educate students in Cuba than in the Western Capitals. He stated that Cuba has an education system that is ranked amongst the top ten (10) in the world by UNESCO.
- 41 He stated that Cuba has four (4) Television Channels, two (2) of which are dedicated to public Education and sensitization. He explained that unity and patriotism of Cubans has greatly contributed to her success as a country. He confided that President Fidel Castro is a good role model as a leader – visionary, principled, humble, strong-willed, yet caring for the ordinary Cubans.
- 42 The delegation expressed admiration for the Cuba education system, stating that Kenya is interested in learning the Education model in Cuba, as the country seems to have failed to discover own needs. They stated that the current model of studying characterized by yearning for money and material property; where one is trained to fend for self and not society; learn from others but not self; free in body but mentally in bondage is anachronistic to Kenya's long-term needs and aspirations. The Members expressed interest in Cuba assisting Kenya to address issues such as HIV/AIDS scourge through technological research for a vaccine.

**Recommendations:**

- 43 The Committee recommends the following:
- 1. A High powered delegation of Education officials should visit Cuba soon to exchange ideas on education models and discuss areas of cooperation for the mutual benefit of the two countries;**
  - 2. The Minister for Education should honour the standing invitation to visit Cuba soon as a step towards strengthening bilateral ties, and exploring other areas of cooperation;**

3. **The Government should consider strengthening the Free Education system in terms of quality and access to facilities in order to ensure that all Kenyan Children obtain quality education;**
4. **The Government should to consider overhauling Education system (curriculum) to reflect the real long-term interests and need of this country. Special focus should be on inculcating values of making a person wholesome and of service to society. It should also give emphasis on technical and scientific aspects.**

**MEETING WITH HON RAMON RIPOLL DEPUTY MINISTER OF ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND FOREIGN INVESTMENTS**

- 44 The Deputy Minister welcomed the delegation and mentioned that he had visited Kenya two years ago, during the first session of the Joint Commission in Nairobi. The Leader of the delegation, Hon. G. G. Kariuki, briefed him on the Committee's mandate, and the status of the Kenya - Cuba Joint Commission. He added that the delegation was in Cuba to share experiences and learn from the people regarding their survival under the US economic blockade. He also expressed the interest of the Committee to urge the Government of Kenya to implement the protocols signed, as Kenya can learn a lot from Cuba in sectors such as Education, health, sports, information technology (IT), Agriculture etc.
- 45 Hon. Ripoll told the delegation that the economic blockade against Cuba by the USA had caused serious sufferings. However, Cuba has developed coping mechanisms that necessitated policy and governance changes in economic management to allow commercial activities in a controlled way. Foreign investors are required to adhere to the law with a view to serving Cuban peoples' interests. The Ministry plays a key role in the economic cooperation and policy implementation particularly with Latin America and Africa, where focus is on health sector cooperation.
- 46 He attributed Cuba's survival under hostile sanctions to public's effective participation in governance, unity and patriotism as well as a strong, visionary and committed leadership cadre. The Education system has further helped to sustain Cuba's long-term aspirations -education is free and universal for all children (100% enrolment) up to University level. He stated that illiteracy was eliminated in the country in 1961 because literacy is the first human right obligation. He also pointed out that Cuba has one of the highest doctor - patient ratio in the world as it has over 70,000 doctors. This has enabled the country to send medical brigades to



other countries. He added that Cuba's health system is rated among the best in the world and is comparable to that in the USA and yet relatively cheaper. Life expectancy is on average 77 years.

- 47 He indicated that after the 1959 Revolution, the Government embarked on a well – planned public investment strategy on social programmes (education and health development go hand in hand) to improve the quality of life of the people. Given that Cuba practices social justice governance system, people have persevered despite hostile economic conditions, particularly in the 1990s after collapse of the Soviet Union, then Cuba's key mentor.
- 48 The Deputy Minister informed the delegation that Cuba has worked closely with certain African Countries e.g. Mozambique on health and education investments. He also indicated that in conjunction with UNESCO, they are working on modifying the Cuban education model for teaching in Nigeria and New Zealand (Maoris) in a campaign to eliminate illiteracy.
- 49 Hon Ripoll stated that the cost of the blockade against Cuba is estimated to be over US \$ 80 billion annually. He indicated that the US unfairly accuses Cuba of human rights violations to justify the blockade contrary to UN Resolutions citing last year's vote where 174 countries voted in favour of lifting the blockade, with only 3 against. He urged Kenya Government, through the delegation to cast a vote in favour of Cuba whenever the issue comes up in the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva.
- 50 The Deputy Minister confided in the delegation that for some unexplained reasons, there has been no real meaningful push for collaborations between the two countries e.g. proposal for medical expatriates from Cuba to assist Kenyans. He intimated that the response from the Government of Kenya (GoK) has not been forthcoming. He stated that Cuba Government is willing to work with Kenyans in any sphere/sector of common interests that Kenyans may identify.
- 51 The Deputy Minister also mentioned that more African Countries generally support Cuba than even Latin America. He cited cases where Cuba last year signed agreements with SADC and ECOWAS regional grouping of countries. He pointed out that in 2005, Cuba plans to engage the East African Community (EAC), and a delegation will tour Tanzania in April 2005. The delegation made a request that Kenya be included in the itinerary.

- 52 The Deputy Minister further stated that the spirit of volunteering and deep patriotism is a strong pillar of Cuba's national culture. Cuba invests significant public resources on social programs in the spirit of socialism, unlike most capitalist societies, which are founded on inequalities (pyrammidrical social structures where a few are extremely rich and the majority absolutely poor). He stated that although salaries in Cuba are not high, the public gets many free and subsidized services e.g. education, health, housing etc. People are cultured to live within their means, and there is enough for all citizens. Cuba has no slums or street families/beggars.
- 53 He informed the Members that his country's current development level has been attained without any support of the IMF/World Bank. He accused the two bodies for being used to pursue the interests of the powerful western powers particularly the USA. He indicated that the real essence of the struggle to block Cuba was driven by the interests of some people in USA, who wish to have Cuba annexed as a state of the USA.
- 54 The Deputy Minister cited possible areas of cooperation between the two countries including Education, Health, Road and Housing constructions, Biotechnology, Information Technology and, Medical Research.
- 55 There upon, Members of the Committee observed that:-
- a. Kenya could learn and benefit from Cuba's experience in free education provision, health and agricultural research, road and housing construction among others;
  - b. Kenya needs to strengthen the implementation of the protocols signed under the Joint Commission;
  - c. Kenya could closely liaise with other developing countries to support Cuban cause internationally by taking joint positions. Cuba can also engage the African Union and the EAC more strongly to give it more support at international fora;
  - d. Kenyans and the Government should learn to live within their own means and prioritize resource use to maximize public service provision, and reduce dependency on foreign aid;
  - e. there is absolute need for more public investments in social development programmes e.g. education, training, health, housing etc. to help improve the quality of people's lives, hence their productivity;
  - f. Cuba's sovereignty need to be respected as per the UN Charter/Resolutions.

## **Recommendations**

56 The Committee recommends that:-

- 1) **the Government should urgently implement the protocols duly signed under the Cuba-Kenya Joint Commission.**
- 2) **GoK should consider voting in favour of the lifting of the blockade against Cuba, in the relevant United Nations agencies;**
- 3) **The Government should increase budgetary allocation for Social development programmes to help improve citizen's quality of life;**

**MEETING WITH HON. RICARDO CABRISAS RUIZ, MINISTER OF STATE (GOVERNMENT)**

57 The Minister welcomed the delegation and pointed out that he was last in Nairobi in 1974, over 30 years ago. He stated that Cuba is interested in strengthening relations with Kenya, and the Parliamentarians' visit is a most welcome step towards this end. He explained that he appreciates the geographical distance as a big challenge, but then, in this global era, there are always opportunities to exchange certain resources such as technological expertise, information and skills transfer in areas such as health and medical research, education etc.

58 The Minister pointed out that he has closely followed and monitored the ACP-EU trade consultations. He expressed hope that developing countries with mutual interests could develop common positions on this area. He lamented that developed countries have continued to push for the liberalization of trade seemingly to spur economic growth in poor countries. However, the economies in poor countries have been opened to the products/services from these powerful, rich countries, yet they have not reciprocated, and hence existence of unequal trade between the poor and rich countries.

59 He observed that it does not make sense for the EU to pressurize developing countries to open up their markets yet at the same time impose non-tariff barriers through phyto-sanitary restrictions to products from these poor countries. As such, he stated that there is now need for developing countries to regularly consult and have a united approach to these international (unbalanced) trade issues.

- 60 Hon G.G. Kariuki, the Leader of the delegation briefed the Minister on the mandate and operations of the Committee. He also pointed out that the visit is a response to the Cuban Foreign Minister's visit to Kenya in 2002, intended to follow up on the bilateral protocols signed between the two countries. He also mentioned the visits by at least three Kenyan Ministers to Cuba last year aimed at forging closer bilateral ties, in spite of past delays. He indicated to the Minister that the Committee's brief is to monitor issues, report, and recommend to the House. In this context, the Committee will undertake to ensure commitments made under the Joint Commission are honoured. He stated that the Members felt Cuba has a lot to offer Kenya in terms of cooperation in education, medical research, sports development, etc. He expressed hope that Cuba could assist Kenya develop a vaccine for malaria and HIV/AIDS.
- 61 He further informed the Minister that Cuba can also benefit from Kenya's premier tourism training institution (*Utalii College*) and high altitude training facilities for their athletes. He indicated that the Committee will engage the Executive to take up the earlier offer made to Kenya (but unfortunately went to Guatemala due to our poor response) by Cuba for medical brigades to be sent to Kenya particularly the rural areas.
- 62 Members expressed solidarity with the Minister's remarks with regard to the need for developing countries to join hands and address international issues e.g. trade from a common position. They called for cooperation in skills, technology transfer and exchange of ideas and information. The Members urged the Minister to influence the Cuban Government to utilize the reinvigorated African Union and Pan African Parliament to lobby African states to jointly oppose negative US influence against lifting of the economic blockade. Members asked the Minister to convey an invitation to President Castro to visit Kenya soon.
- 63 There was a general agreement between the Members and the Minister for the two countries to work with other Developing Countries to pressurize the EU to open up its market for agricultural products and remove the numerous non-tariff barriers hampering trade.
- 64 Members also called on the Cuban Government to use its superior technological and skills to assist Kenya address issues of HIV/AIDS, poverty and provision of free education. They blamed the colonial legacy and cold war polarization for the hitherto distant bilateral relationships between Cuba and Kenya. They

nevertheless indicated that there now exist the requisite political good will to forge cordial ties. They were of the view that protocols signed should be reviewed regularly to reflect the mutual interests of the people of the two states, but each state should ensure that they are fully implemented.

65 The Minister expressed concern that the Western Powers do not actually care for the poor countries and always divert the focus of a country's Government from pursuing issues of interests to their own people, by encouraging misallocation of resources.

66 There upon, the Committee observed that:-

1. the media is the weapon/avenue used for cultural domination and distortion by the West to keep the poor in the world, in mental bondage. There is need to strengthen relations amongst developing countries such as Kenya and Cuba not only at Government level, but also at Parliamentary levels.
2. although the cold war ended, it has not been over in Cuba due to the blockade by the US. Cuba's economy largely relies on tourism (60 - 68% of GDP) and this has helped pull up other economic sectors. The US has continued to pressurize other countries not to engage with Cubans by threatening severing of aid or trade ties. Nevertheless, Cuba has developed her own coping strategies and attained the present status using own resources and sheer hard work. Public resources are used effectively and efficiently on a priority basis with the people uppermost in leader's mind.
3. Cuba people are quite patriotic, educated and clearly understand their country's history and thus have developed and grown up anticipating US attack on their country, but are always prepared for such an eventuality.
4. there are no absolutely poor people in Cuba- the government advocates and pursues a social development agenda that discourages social stratification - hence the rich - poor gap is negligible.
5. it is clear that education and health care provisions are key strategies used by the Cuban Government in its poverty eradication programmes,
6. to control the HIV/AIDS scourge in Cuba (prevalence is 0.05%) a two pronged-strategy of public education for citizens to take own responsibility for prevention, and acceleration of scientific research

to introduce low-cost Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ARTs) medicines for those already infected, has been put in place to control its spread.

7. Cuba is willing to share its technologically advanced medical research skills with other developing countries like Kenya to address ailments in tropical areas e.g. malaria, HIV/AIDS, cholera and, cancer by developing vaccines. Indeed, the Committee learnt that Cuba has developed a cancer vaccine upon which the USA is undertaking clinical trials (in spite of the blockade) on condition that Cuba's patent right to the technology is acknowledged.

## **Recommendations**

67 Consequently, the Committee recommends that:-

- i. the Government, particularly the Ministry of Finance should urgently consider changing the structures of public spending to consciously spend more on productive sectors, rather than consumptive activities. Public resources should be used effectively and efficiently on a priority basis to improve the citizens quality of life e.g. education, health, security, agriculture and infrastructure development. This is the surest way to cut down on foreign aid and spur sustainable economic growth;**
- ii. the Government should strategically hold consultations with other developing countries with a view to developing joint common positions on critical international issues e.g. trade with the EU, WTO and voting in the UN on important matters, bearing the real interests of our country, now and in to the future;**
- iii. the Government should as a matter of urgency consolidate bilateral agreements with Cuba for the mutual benefits of the two countries. Areas of cooperation include education, health, research, sports, agriculture (biotechnology), housing and road construction as well as tourism. In this regard, the offer for a medical brigade should be considered urgently given the shortage of medical doctors in Kenya, particularly the rural areas.**
- iv. The Government should consider opening a consulate in Havana in the short-term and a full mission in the long term.**
- v. Ministerial visits between the two countries should be encouraged, and ultimately, Presidential visits too in the near future as a symbol of the reinvigorated bilateral ties**

**between Cuba and Kenya. The Committee clearly holds the view that Kenya stands to benefit immensely from well thought out bilateral cooperation programme with Cuba.**

**MEETING WITH MR. ENRIQUE ROMAN, VICE CHAIRMAN, CUBA INSTITUTE OF FRIENDSHIP**

- 68 Mr. Roman welcomed the Members to the headquarters of the Institute, and gave a brief account of its activities. He stated that over 1000 organizations from Asia, Africa, Europe and even USA have ties of solidarity with Cubans, and support Cuba's cause for lifting of the blockade. He mentioned that every year, over 40 brigades are sent to different parts of the world including Australia and Britain to work in rural areas. The institute also participates in international congresses e.g. World Social Forum held in Dubai and the Caribbean recently. He observed that the Friendship is open to all those who wish to understand the realities in Cuba and are against the USA imposed blockade.
- 69 He informed Members that only USA and Israel support the blockade, while many states and important personalities have joined the movement in solidarity with Cuban citizen's sufferings. He pointed out that the people's support for the Revolution has sustained the country; otherwise, Cuba could have collapsed in the 1990s. Cubans are focused and committed to their national values and moral integrity, hence have achieved what many in the world thought was impossible. For example, in the 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba lost over 70% of her international trade incomes abruptly. There were several aggression attempts by US warships, but Cubans proved more determined and resilient. Unity and patriotism are key to the success of the Revolution as it virtually eliminated classifications (social) in Cuban Society. Education of the masses is critical to the Revolution. Ownership and participation of the people in the development and governance process is very important in sustainable development.
- 70 There are four television channels used for promotion of positive aspects in society (care, social justice, fairness, patience etc) and not negative aspects such as selfishness, materialism, social classifications (race, ethnicity) etc.
- 71 The leader of the delegation briefed him on the purpose of the visit as well as the mandate and operations of the committee. He pointed out that the Members were on a learning mission to

understand Cuba, her people and what they stood for, as well as express solidarity with their struggles and endeavour for making the world a better living place for humanity. He informed him that the visit by Kenyan legislators to Cuba is the first ever and has not been done before, but several Ministers visited Cuba the previous. He invited the Deputy Chairman to visit Kenya and share his ideas with the university communities, parliamentarians, business and civil society organizations.

72 Hon. Mghanga informed him that he was now the interim Chairperson of the Kenya – Cuba Friendship Society, launched in August 2004, which is open to all persons who support the Cuban cause.

73 There upon, the Committee Members observed that:-

- i. the media is a powerful tool of mass education that need to be used responsibly to promote positive aspects and values in society;
- ii. education is a basic human right of all citizens and is critical to societal well being and development;
- iii. educational, scientific, medical and cultural exchange programmes should be initiated for the mutual benefit of the two countries;
- iv. the Western countries via the World Bank and IMF spend huge amounts of resources in developing arms equipping their armed forces, and exporting arms to developing countries. At the same time, they impose structural adjustment policies that force governments in developing countries to drastically cut back expenditure on social development programmes meant to improve lives of the poor e.g. education, health, housing etc. Kenyan's budgetary allocations should reflect our country's real needs and priorities;
- v. unity, patriotism, strong selfless and focused leadership is critical for a countries' development,
- vi. a country like Kenya needs an effective marketing institute or organization to market its image and counter-the negative international image and perceptions. Competent, patriotic, trained and well-exposed cadre of staff should be deployed to operate this.

### **Recommendations**

74 Consequently, the Committee recommends that:-



1. the government should urgently initiate a well-thought out education, scientific, cultural/sports exchange programme between Cuba and Kenya;
2. the government should re-structure its budgetary focus to allocate more resources to productive activities and social development programmes, that have a long-term positive societal impact e.g. education, health, technical training, research etc;
3. Kenyan parents/students should be encouraged to pursue higher education in Cuba where it is relatively cheaper and technically superior and relevant to our development needs compared to Western countries in terms of values, self-belief etc. This could be achieved as part of the Joint Commission that exists between the two countries.

#### **LUNCH MEETING WITH KENYAN STUDENTS STUDYING IN CUBA AT HOTEL NATIONAL DE CUBA**

- 75 The delegation hosted a luncheon for some representatives of the 29 Kenyan students studying various disciplines in several universities in Cuba. The student representatives informed the Members that they were on scholarships from the Cuba government. Members learnt that the student's areas/course of study are diverse and include economics, chemical engineering, sports and medicine. All of them are required to study Spanish language during the first year, as it is the language of instruction.
- 76 The students expressed concern over several issues which they appealed to the Kenya Government, (through the Members and the Kenya High Commission) to look into urgently. These include:
1. low stipend of US \$ 3 per month or 100 Cuban Pesos;
  2. inability to pay for air tickets, to enable them travel home for vacation i.e. for the duration of the study which takes an average of five years, one has no chance of seeing relatives;
  3. inadequate studying materials/equipments such as stationery, computer & internet facilities
- 77 The leader of the delegation addressed the students and advised them to reflect carefully on their circumstances compared to home situation, and be patient and persevering because they were there for just a specific purpose and period. He told them that they were indeed lucky to come abroad on scholarship and hence should focus on the longer-term objectives of their career aspirations, in spite of the difficulties they were likely to experience.

- 78 On his part, Ambassador Ogego told the students and Members that he had communicated their grievances to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education recommending that their stipend be raised to at least US \$ 20 per month. He intimated that it would be insensitive to make them a privileged lot in Cuba by giving US \$ 100 as demanded by the students given the fact that they were provided with free accommodation, meals and tuition.
- 79 Hon. Mwandawiro Mghanga informed the students that their parents had met and formed the Kenya – Cuba Friendship Society, of which he informed them that he was the interim chairperson, to help share ideas and issues facing the students among other matters. He told them that the parents are proud that their children have an opportunity to study in Cuba, whose education system is very much respected worldwide. Besides the degrees, the Kenyans would also learn certain values such as patience, humility, self-discipline, selflessness to make them whole persons useful to the society.
- 80 The Members informed the students that the issues they had raised would be relayed to the relevant Government officials and/or even raised in the House. However, they cautioned the students that government processes take long but solutions would come in due course. Members also expressed the view that the parents should also chip in to assist their children meet some of the needs where possible.
- 81 The delegation however expressed concern over the opaque manner that such scholarships are awarded without publicity given to allow effective competition for the best students in the country to apply.

### **Recommendations**

- 82 The Committee therefore recommends that;-
- a) advertisements for scholarships be done in the main national media in Kenya to give all eligible Kenyans an opportunity to apply,**
  - b) the Government should negotiate with Cuba to have more scholarships offered to Kenya, and also consider admitting more fees-paying students to Cuban institutions of higher learning,**

- c) **Government should consider subsidizing the students' stipend and having it raised from US\$ 3 to \$ 20 per month,**
- d) **The Kenya-Cuba Friendship Society should be strengthened to help address some of the students' concerns; as well as encourage closer interaction and solidarity of the peoples of the two countries.**

**MEETING WITH MR. FERNANDO REMIREZ ESTENOZ, HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CUBA.**

- 83 Mr. Estenoz warmly welcomed the delegation and stated that there is a very close relationship between Cuba and Africa, as the island's people have roots from both Africa and Spain. People of African descent played a significant role in the struggle for liberation of Cuba and Cubans are proud of their African heritage. He informed the Members that over 300,000 Cubans fought in various parts of Africa for liberation guided by the example of Kenya's *mau mau* struggle. He pointed out that Kenya is a strategic country in Africa and Cuba is interested in forging closer relations. He added that Cuba was the last Spanish colony in Latin America and her independence struggle was the longest ever and cost at least a quarter of her population.
- 84 He intimated that the 1959 Revolution and socialism are the strategies used by the Cubans to maintain their own independence and sovereignty. He stated that the current world order where over 3 billion people live in poverty, 40 million are affected by HIV/AIDS, and 11 million children die each year of preventable illnesses is very disturbing to Cubans, yet the developed countries do not care. He explained that this is the reason why after the Revolution, education and health care provision were given priority as vehicles of liberating the people.
- 85 He informed the Members that the Communist Party is the only political party and has over 900,000 members, led by focused leaders with a big vision for the country. He gave a brief analysis of the country's socio-economic situation as follows:-
1. large oil deposits recently discovered offshore
  2. Nickel production stood at 77,000 tons in 2004, but Cuba cannot export to USA due to the blockade. USA has banned steel makers from use of Cuban Nickel in the production of vehicles
  3. Cuba receives an estimated 2 million tourists annually

4. there is no illiteracy in Cuba; school enrolment is 100%
5. Cuba has had an average 400,000 students in universities, but this year, it is a record 700,000.
6. there is universal healthcare and the life expectancy is 77 years; there is now a problem of old age and social security.
7. due to the blockade, Cuba loses an estimated \$ 80 billion annually.
8. In 2004/5, Cuba experienced the worst drought in 75 years in Eastern parts of the country, yet the economy grew by 5%

86 Mr. Estenoz pointed out that the Communist Party in Cuba believes that ideas are stronger in countering adversity than arms. People must be made to understand the essence of the struggle so that the young can safeguard the future, and sovereignty of a country. He observed that the major world media organizations have specific instructions not to write or cover positive developments in Cuba.

87 The Members of the delegation thanked Mr. Estenoz for his impressive ideas. They briefed him on the operations and mandate of the committee, adding that the visit was to learn and share ideas, as well as show solidarity with Cubans. Members invited Mr. Estenoz to consider visiting Kenya to share ideas with young students at universities and secondary schools to expose them to real situation in the world characterized by injustices, imbalances, racialism and unfairness of the existing global order.

88 Members of the delegation observed that Cubans deserve credit for standing firm and resisting USA aggression. They called on the Cuban leaders to unite with African states and other developing countries in the struggle to make the world a better place, through demanding attention to issues adversely affecting them by holding joint positions internationally.

#### **VISIT TO THE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH (CNIC)**

89 The delegation visited the Centre for Scientific Research (CNIC) to familiarize themselves with its operations. Mr. Luis Delgado Perez, an officer responsible for International Relations, conducted them to a briefing. He informed the Members the Research Centre was the first research institute to be established in 1965 in Cuba, through a presidential decree; and is celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year.

- 90 He gave the delegation a brochure of the programme of the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations for a scientific congress and expressed hope that Kenyan Representatives could participate as from June 27-30, 2005. Its focus is on Bio-technical research on health (BIO-medical) issues afflicting the society. Since inception, CNIC has trained over 20,000 specialists in various bio-medical fields e.g. neuro-sciences, bio-technological diagnostic equipments, microbiological diagnostic technology (urinary tract infections), as well as undertaking vaccine trials e.g. ones on cholera and cancer that are going on. He informed the delegation that there are other centres, which have evolved out of the CNIC.
- 91 He informed the delegation that a Kenyan medical research delegation had visited the centre sometime earlier. He intimated that should an Agreement be signed between the two countries, Cuba could then assist Kenya and other African countries to undertake joint studies on key diseases in Africa e.g. malaria, cholera, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS etc. He added that an expression of interest (EOI) proposal had been sent to Kenya (see copy in the Annex) seeking for a counter-part to evaluate a cholera vaccine, but the Kenyan medical team had then expressed interest in a malaria vaccine. He informed the Members that the Centre for Tropical Research was working on trials on a vaccine for Ebola and AIDS diseases.
- 92 He expressed hope that Kenya would soon establish a mission in Havana, to help fast-track areas of mutual interest in research between the two countries.
- 93 He further informed the Members that CNIC could undertake research on almost any aspect. He indicated that despite the US blockade, the Centre has come up with solutions for virtually all ailments in Cuba through research e.g. malaria. Cuba is willing to collaborate with Kenyan researchers to address some of the major ailments in the country. However, he observed that financial constraints remain the major challenge in the medical cooperation efforts with African states and called for joint mobilization of resources. He indicated that a medical team would visit South Africa soon, and possibly stop over in Nairobi.
- 94 Members gave a brief of their Committee's mandate and operations, and undertook to follow up on the Research proposal for the cholera vaccine trials with the relevant branches of the Executive arm of government. They also informed the official at CNIC that the Minister for Foreign Affairs was expected to visit



Cuba very soon, and might address the issue of establishing a mission in Havana.

### **Recommendations**

95 The Committee consequently recommends that:-

- i. the relevant Government Ministry/Departments should urgently consider the proposal by Cubans to carry out joint research and trials on the main diseases affecting Kenya e.g. malaria, cholera, Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS etc;**
- ii. Kenya's scientific community should make arrangements to participate in the upcoming world wide scientific congress planned for June 27-30, 2005 in Havana Cuba;**
- iii. a Ministerial delegation led by the Minister of Health and scientists/researchers should undertake a visit to Cuba, to explore possibilities of enhancing Joint-Health Research Programmes for the mutual benefits of the two countries;**
- iv. the Government (Treasury) should allocate adequate financial resources for carrying out scientific research in our institutions to address local diseases in collaboration with other centres e.g. CNIC.**

### **MEETING WITH HON JOSE GUERRA MENCHERO THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

- 96 Hon Menchero warmly welcomed the delegation and proposed that the meeting adopt a question-answer format. The Leader of the delegation introduced the Members and gave a brief on the Committees mandate and operations. He stated that the visit was a follow up of the ones made previously by two Kenyan Ministers and one Assistant Minister last year, all meant to consolidate bilateral relations between the two countries. He also disclosed to him that Kenya's Minister for Foreign Affairs would soon make an official visit to Cuba.
- 97 On his part, Hon Menchero stated that Cuba government eagerly awaited the Foreign Minister's official visit with expectation that this will lead to opening a mission in Havana.
- 98 He gave an account of the development strides made by Cuba, despite the blockade. He observed that Sub-Saharan Africa, which has an estimated 560 million people, has fewer doctors than

Cuba's 70,000, yet Cuba has a population of 11 million people, and said that that was the reason Cuba wanted to assist Africa with medical brigades. Cuban doctors do not necessarily work in urban areas, but also in the countryside. They get a lot of experience out there, treating ailments that do not even exist in Cuba. Cuban's African heritage is also a big reason for the move to collaborate with Africa, as a moral debt repayment strategy.

- 99 He added that Cuba's defence strategy is based on deterrence, informed by the view that anyone attacking the island country has to realize that it would be extremely costly to do so. He informed the delegation that Cuba has survived at least ten (10) different USA administrations but none has been as severe as the current one but he declared that Cuba would nevertheless survive.
- 100 He observed that since Kenya sits in the 54 member UN-Human Rights Commission in Geneva, and in the past had traditionally been abstaining during voting, Kenya should consider voting no to the condemnation of Cuba, and for the lifting of the blockade, as a measure of bringing decency and sincerity in the international body. He stated that last year (2004), Africa almost as a block voted against US-sponsored UN Resolution to maintain the embargo. He indicated that the US Government was harbouring and supporting terrorists in Miami, working for the fall of Cuba. He gave account of the so-called Miami Five-volunteers who went to USA to gather intelligence on terrorist plans against Cuba, but were caught and unfairly sentenced to life imprisonment by US Authorities, and held in isolation, not even allowed to see their families.

### **Recommendations**

101 Consequently, the Committee recommends that:

- 1. Kenya (GoK representatives) should consider voting in favour of Cuba at the relevant UN Agencies**
- 2. the government should consider opening in Harare a consulate, in the short-term and a full mission in the long-term.**

### **VISIT TO MANAGUA MUNICIPALITY**

- 102 The delegation visited a Polyclinic (family doctor's clinic) Centre in a village in Managua municipality to inspect health facilities at village level. The Members were informed that there is no preventable children diseases e.g. kwashiorkor, marasmus, cholera etc. in Cuba. The country has also completely controlled malaria through a campaign that began in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The government emphasizes preventive health care as a policy, but curative services are also offered free of charge. About 89% of the population has piped water in their houses.
- 103 Members were further informed that the main ailments afflicting Cubans are similar to those of rich countries e.g. hypertension. There are family doctors in each village, while divisional health centres are within walking distances, where services offered include family planning, maternal child health, rehabilitation etc. The centre has 25 family doctors (General Practitioners), and 5 specialists including psychologists, gynecologists, pediatrics' etc. The doctor-patient ratio is 1:100 in Cuba.

### **VISIT TO THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL FOR PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS**

- 104 The delegation paid a visit to the University of Sports where eight (8) Kenya students are studying, and held a meeting with the Director, as well as the students. Members learnt that the school had 1000 students from over 74 countries, eight of whom are from Kenya. The training takes four (4) years, plus one more for learning Spanish, the language of instruction.
- 105 The institution largely trains sports coaches/trainers in physical education (all sports), physical recreation among others. The students were addressed by Members and the High Commissioner, who all expressed gratitude to the Director and the Cuban government for the scholarships offered to Kenyans. Indeed most of the students expressed gratitude for the opportunities offered, but they also explained that they face certain difficulties in the course of their training – similar to the ones mentioned earlier by their colleagues. Members encouraged them to persevere and reflect on the circumstances at home and make the best out their stay in Cuba as the government attempts to seek a practical solution to their grievances.



## **VISIT TO THE INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL WORKERS, HAVANA.**

- 106 The delegation made a visit to the Institute of Social Workers in Havana, established as a base for training the university brigade of social workers. Its main objective is to prepare youth to cope with social issues and keep them from engaging in ant-social behaviour.
- 107 The delegation was informed that President Castro established the institute five years ago, and that there are now four such institutes in Cuba. There are over 21,000-trained social workers in Cuba. They are linked to the Ministry of Health and Labour as well as federation of women. They derive their mission from President Castro's beliefs and ideas that it is a shame to have a young person not either working, studying or in prison, hence a lot of focus is given to young people in schools, prisons and the unemployed youths. Cuba has given itself a 'utopian' ideal of closing down prison facilities and transforming them in to learning/training institutions.
- 108 A pilot programme has been started in Eastern parts of Cuba where non-working youth are paid to go for training (unemployment in Cuba is estimated at 3%). The level of pay depends on the level of education or training attained. Members heard that the Revolution guarantees jobs, but only for trained persons. This is the concept being extended to all parts of Cuba, including prisons.
- 109 Under this pilot project, new prisoners are emerging – termed trained guiders or guardians where instead of use of force, use of knowledge or brainpower is given prominence and respect, for the last two years. Experiments on this model are going on in one of the municipalities in Havana under which prisons are referred to as schools and some prisoners are now taking university courses. For a prisoner to be selected under the project, one must be young, have no prior record of crime, and be of good conduct while in prison. At least 12 social workers are deployed in the experimental centre to rehabilitate and transform prisoners. Giving prisoners a second chance can transform their lives.
- 110 The social workers are also working with families, the elderly people, persons with disabilities/and mothers of disabled kids (in certain cases, they pay them to forgo jobs, in order to take care of their disabled children at home).
- 111 After graduation, the trained social workers can join the universities, for a ten (10) month course, combining 8 different

subjects. There is a continuous review and modification of the programme to align it with changing social needs.

112 Members learnt that Cuba and Costa Rica have the lowest incidences of crime in Latin America.

113 There upon, Members observed that:-

1. schools and universities in the municipalities shared facilities – every municipality has a University.
2. the minimum salary paid to Cubans is 220 Pesos.
3. good governance, visionary leadership that really cares for the well-being of citizens is critical for national stability and sustainable development.
4. there is a close link between education and training and the potential for engaging in criminality. In relative terms, most educated/trained people have lower chances of going to prisons.
5. the society must be educated/sensitized to appreciate and accept rehabilitated ex-convicts – they are after all products of the society.
- 6 giving prisoners a second chance can transform their lives

### **Recommendations**

114 The Committee therefore recommends that:-

- a) **the Ministers respectively responsible for Education, Health, Culture and Social Services should soon undertake a study visit to Cuba;**
- b) **the Government should specifically strengthen the scientific and technological content of educational programmes, and even consider making scientific and technological proficiency a requirement in the same category as Mathematics and English;**
- c) **the Government should invest more resources on social services and rehabilitation of youths in the streets and prisons to give them a second chance.**

