



ORGANIZACIÓN DE SOLIDARIDAD DE LOS PUEBLOS DE ÁFRICA, ASIA Y AMÉRICA LATINA
ORGANISATION DE SOLIDARITÉ DES PEUPLES D'AFRIQUE, D'ASIE ET D' AMÉRIQUE LATINE
ORGANIZATION OF SOLIDARITY OF THE PEOPLES OF AFRICA, ASIA AND LATIN AMERICA

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The Organization of Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America (OSPAAAL) emerged as permanent result of the First Tricontinental Conference held in Havana, Cuba, in January, 1966.

It is an international non-governmental organization. Its essential purpose is to offer, channel and link in one single effort the solidarity among the peoples of Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean in support of their struggles and essential demands: the defense of the legitimate right to national independence, sovereignty and self-determination, respect for identity and ethnical-cultural diversity, and the aspirations to the ecologically sustainable development, with social justice.

In recognition to the sustained work in solidarity with Third World causes, in July 1998 the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations Organization (ECOSOC) decided to grant OSPAAAL the special Consultative Status for its contribution to the knowledge and respect for the principles of International Law and the purposes of the Chart of the United Nations, and for its contributions to non-governmental forums held on the occasion of world conferences on themes of global interest.

CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW)

COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

PERIODIC REVIEW - CUBA

55th Period of Sessions

8th-26th July, 2013.

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Individual written contribution of the Organization of Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America (OSPAAAL) to the Periodic Review of Cuba at the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

1. We are living the year 55 of a new age opened in Cuba, by and for the people of Cuba, after the triumph of the Revolution of January, 1959.
2. That historical moment and event enabled Cuban men and women to attain their true independence and create conditions for the full and universal enjoyment of all human rights. The profound economic, political, social and cultural transformations undertaken, made it possible to eliminate the structural injustices inherited from centuries of colonial and neocolonial domination.
3. The will of the Cuban people and government to fully exert the right to self-determination; to freely decide the socialist nature of its political system; to choose without interferences its own, inclusive and participative project of democracy; to struggle for the equality of all persons without discrimination for reasons of gender, race, creed or other type of difference; to place human beings in the center of their welfare and development targets; and to construct a higher society with social justice has been continuously proven by the facts throughout more than five decades.
4. The battle against discrimination and progress of women are summarized in overwhelming and internationally recognized figures: Cuban women are 65.6% of the country's professionals and technicians; 47.7% of university graduates; 35.6% of the graduates of technical studies; they hold 36.7% of leading posts and are 47.3% of the labor force in the state's civil sector; they hold 38% of the ministers' posts and 48.86% of the seats in Parliament, the third place in the world. Since all human actions are perfectible, Cubans of both genders still struggle against any remnant of discrimination and any diffuse form of sexism or male chauvinism.
5. Cuba was the first country to sign and the second to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). In 1997, the Council of State of the Republic of Cuba approved the National Action Plan for the Follow-Up of the 4th United Nations World Conference on Women, whose fulfillment has been subjected to two evaluation seminars.
6. But the struggle for the full equality of women in Cuba has had to face not only the structural discrimination and inequality inherited by the preceding patriarchal

capitalist society, but another huge challenge: the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States Government against Cuba for more than 50 years.

7. The U.S. blockade, a unilateral, punitive and extra-territorial measure, is a flagrant violation of International Law, and qualifies as an act of genocide by virtue of the Geneva Convention of 1948. It has been rejected by the international community of nations, in an almost unanimous way, through Resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly during 21 consecutive years.
8. Cuban women, as an inseparable part of society, have endured the scarcity of food products, medicines, advanced technological equipment for specialized health services, lack of energy supply, of fuel, limitations in public transportation, in construction materials, in footwear, clothing and school uniforms for girls and boys, the impairment of their textbooks – objective hindrances affecting the entire population, and women and children in particular.
9. One of the most sensible areas affected by the blockade is preschool education. There are 60,000 applications for kindergarten capacities that have not been granted for lack of facilities, which represent labor and emotional insecurity for mothers who have to appeal to relatives or other non-qualified persons to look after their children. The educational process in preschool education is being affected by hygienic deficiencies, lack of fuel, of refrigeration equipment for the food products, of school furniture and of didactic materials and toys.
10. In the field of sexual and reproductive health, the unsatisfied needs of family planning are calculated in 22% according to figures from 2011. As a result of the blockade, Cuban women have no access to the assortment of birth control methods existing in the world, which prevents them from selecting the one that best pleases them and best protects them, without altering their health. Cuban women cannot fully enjoy that right since the availability of contraceptives to cover the population's general needs is restricted as to variety and at times insufficient quantities of the scarce assortment. On the other hand, the possibilities of having studies made and treatments carried out to couples with infertility problems are also limited because of the specificity of the techniques to be employed, requiring the costly search of companies and laboratories with no U.S. companies among their shareholders nor users of components produced in that country, which requires arduous negotiations and increases the cost of each treatment.
11. In matters of labor safety and health, the blockade has prevented the access to high technology means of labor protection and hygiene with high levels of safety for women performing complex tasks in production, science research and services, since there are prohibitions to U.S. subsidiaries regarding exports to Cuba, which forces the country to purchase said technologies in distant latitudes with the corresponding rise of costs.

12. A similar negative impact is produced by the fact that women's organizations and institutions in the United States are now allowed to cooperate with organizations in Cuba. Such is the case of the Global Fund for Women, which despite its willingness to grant funds for the development of cooperation projects for the benefit of Cuban women is prevented from doing so due to the blockade and the absurd prohibition to U.S. citizens to travel to Cuba.
13. The denial of visas to participate in events in the United States has also influenced the reduction of academic exchanges between Cuban and U.S. women in such essential fields as exact, biotechnological and social sciences. Equally inhuman and criminal is Washington's reiterated negative to grant visa to Adriana Pérez O'Connor to visit her husband, Gerardo Hernández, a Cuban anti-terrorist fighter unjustly incarcerated in the United States, which violates even the United States' own legislation.
14. We underline that the blockade against Cuba is a form of indirect violence severely exerted against Cuban women. It all contrasts with Cuba's political will, which has made possible for women to be directly benefited from programs and plans aimed at achieving their active insertion and full leading roles, with equal rights and opportunities, in the country's economic, political, social and cultural life. That determination has derived in relevant advancements as gender equality, deserved respect, and recognition of the female condition in society.
15. To Cuban women, society means mankind; therefore they have inserted themselves with generosity and abnegation, playing leading roles, into the international collaboration that Cuba carries out in solidarity with Third World brotherly countries.
16. Cuba has developed programs of cooperation in the fields of education, public health, sports and culture in 155 countries.
17. Among the most important educational programs are "Yo sí puedo" and "Yo sí puedo seguir" ("Yes, I can", and "Yes, I can continue"), which are currently being carried out in more than 25 countries. The educational programs have a special impact, since they aim their efforts mainly at women, who make up for the majority of the illiterate population. A Cuban woman, Doctor in Pedagogical Sciences, Leonela Relys Díaz, is the authoress of that adult literacy method that has enabled the teaching of more than 7 million persons in 30 countries, and which has made possible for 900,000 persons to reach a schooling level equivalent to sixth grade.
18. According to figures from the Central Collaboration Unit of the Cuban Ministry of Public Health, more than 130,000 professionals and technicians have fulfilled missions as collaborators in the field of health; 66,090 of them (approximately 50.8%) have been women.
19. The Cuban presence in this cooperation area has increased, since Cuba presently grants medical services in 60 countries with 39,310 collaborators, 25,525 (65%) of whom are women.

20. The Organization of Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America (OSPAAAL), with headquarters in Havana since its foundation 47 years ago, presents this contribution to the Periodic Review of Cuba before the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women by offering truthful statistics and objective considerations that endorse the sincerity of the country's commitment with the struggle against every vestige of gender discrimination, as well as the relevant progress made by Cuba in the defense of the rights, opportunities and equality of women.

