

SHADOW REPORT
Review of the Republic of Cuba
117th session fo the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
Submitted by CETIM (Centre Europe - Tiers Monde / Europe-Third World Centre)
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I. Introduction

1. This submission from CETIM (Centre Europe - Tiers Monde) aims to contribute to the Committee's review of Cuba. We welcome the opportunity to offer our perspective on the State's combined twenty-second to twenty-sixth periodic reports.
2. CETIM acknowledges the significant and long-standing efforts of the Republic of Cuba to combat all forms of discrimination, a commitment rooted in its principles of equity and social justice. We also want to be clear from the outset: we view the ongoing US economic, commercial, and financial embargo as a major obstacle to Cuba's right to development and to the full enjoyment of human rights by its people. This unilateral coercive measure forms the harsh backdrop against which Cuba's achievements must be assessed. This report highlights those achievements while offering constructive observations to encourage further progress.

II. Key Achievements and Measures

A. Strengthened Constitutional and Legal Framework

3. CETIM applauds the profound legislative reform in Cuba, particularly the 2019 Constitution. Enshrining the principle of equality and non-discrimination—explicitly including "ethnic origin" and "skin colour"—in Article 42 provides a robust, foundational guarantee for all. This is a major step forward.
4. We further welcome the new Criminal Code (Act No. 151/2022). Its specific chapter on "offences against the right to equality" (Article 388) and the classification of racist motives as aggravating circumstances for other crimes (Article 80) give the judiciary concrete tools to combat discrimination effectively. This legal architecture translates constitutional principles into enforceable rights.
5. The new Family Code (Act No. 156/2022), approved by popular referendum, is another important step forward. By explicitly prohibiting discrimination within the family based on skin colour (Article 15), the State is promoting equality from the ground up.

B. Institutional Innovation and Public Policy: The "Color Cubano" Programme

6. CETIM considers the 2019 launch of the National Programme against Racism and Racial Discrimination "Color Cubano" and its National Commission a landmark initiative. This comprehensive, multi-sectoral programme, structured around 11 subprogrammes with specific

targets, shows a sophisticated understanding that tackling racial discrimination requires an affirmative and structural approach, not just legal prohibition.

7. The programme's design integrates government, academia, and civil society, while aiming at improving the socioeconomic situation of Black and mulatto populations across key areas like work, education, and housing is particularly noteworthy. CETIM views "Color Cubano" as a model of proactive policy and encourages the State to continue providing it with the necessary resources and political backing for full implementation at all levels.

C. Guarantees of Economic and Social Rights and International Solidarity

8. CETIM recognizes Cuba's unwavering prioritization of economic and social rights as fundamental. The State's guarantee of free, universal access to healthcare and education remains a powerful tool for ensuring equality of opportunity. Data showing the distribution of students across educational levels by skin colour, and the constitutional guarantee of equal access to all public spaces, demonstrate a firm, lived commitment to non-discrimination.

9. Cuba also promoted a highly effective and just social assistance system, which, despite immense economic pressures, provides targeted support to families in situations of vulnerability. The detailed data on benefits and specific programmes for mothers and persons with disabilities show a state machinery actively working to protect its most vulnerable citizens.

10. Finally, CETIM wants to highlight and commend Cuba's unparalleled international solidarity. The scale of its medical cooperation, especially in Africa—from "Operación Milagro" and the Henry Reeve brigades to training thousands of health professionals from the Global South—is a tangible, living expression of the principles of anti-racism and global equity.

III. Encouraging Continued Progress in Protecting the Most Vulnerable

11. While acknowledging these significant achievements, we offer a few observations aimed at encouraging Cuba's continued progress. Again, we stress that these efforts are undertaken in the extraordinarily difficult context of the US embargo, a coercive measure CETIM has long opposed. It is the single biggest impediment to Cuba's economic and social development.

12. CETIM notes with satisfaction the numerous references to collaboration between state institutions and civil society organizations fighting racism, such as the Aponte Commission, Articulación Afrofeminista, and others. This synergy is a real strength.

13. CETIM notes the collaboration between state institutions and civil society organizations fighting racism, as documented in the State report. To build on this foundation, CETIM recommends that the State establish formal, institutionalized consultation mechanisms that ensure civil society actors—particularly organizations led by Black and mulatto communities, such as Articulación Afrofeminista and the Aponte Commission—are systematically involved in the design, monitoring, and evaluation of the "Color Cubano" programme. We further recommend that the State provide sustained financial and technical support to independent civil society initiatives like the

"Color Cubano" social observatory, enabling them to contribute effectively to policy feedback and accountability.

14. While the State report references Afro-feminist and LGBTIQ+ initiatives, CETIM recommends that the "Color Cubano" programme explicitly integrate an intersectional perspective across all its subprogrammes. This means developing specific indicators and targeted measures to address the compounded discrimination faced by, for example, Black women, Afro-descendant persons with disabilities, and Afro-Cuban LGBTIQ+ individuals. Such an approach would align Cuba's policies with the Committee's General Recommendation No. 34 on racial discrimination against people of African descent.

15. Cuba's positive legal and institutional framework must now be followed by consistent and effective implementation. We encourage the State to continue investing in training for judges, prosecutors, and law enforcement on applying these new laws, to ensure justice is a lived reality for all.

16. CETIM recommends that the State develop a national strategy for public education and awareness-raising on racial equality, to be implemented in coordination with the Ministry of Education, the media, and civil society. This strategy should include integrating anti-racist content systematically across all levels of school curricula, building on existing initiatives; promoting positive representations of Afro-Cuban history, culture, and contributions in state media and cultural institutions; conducting regular public campaigns to challenge stereotypes and prejudices, with measurable targets for reach and impact.

17. Given the devastating impact of the US economic, commercial, and financial embargo on Cuba's ability to allocate resources to social programmes—including those aimed at combating racial discrimination—CETIM calls on the Committee to reiterate its concern about the negative effects of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights, and to urge States to lift such measures in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

IV. Conclusion

18. In conclusion, CETIM recognizes that Cuba has made remarkable, exemplary progress in its fight against racial discrimination. The "Color Cubano" programme, in particular, represents a profound state commitment to addressing structural racism. We encourage the State to continue this vital work, focusing on depth of implementation, collaboration with civil society, and an intersectional approach.