**COMMENTS ON THE UNDP DRAFT COUNTRY PROGRAMME DOCUMENT FOR CUBA (2020-2024)**

*First regular session 2020*

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| **Comments by Finland** | **Country Office response** |
| * CPD Section IV: Monitoring and Evaluation, based on the costed evaluation plan, consider elaborating on:
	+ What type of evaluations are planned and what will they be used for?
	+ How will they serve accountability and learning?
	+ What will be produced based on the monitoring and evaluation information?
	+ What share of the programme budget will be spent on M&E?
	+ What are the key areas of development identified in M&E?
 | * ***Type of Evaluations***: 19 Decentralized: 18 projects and 1 Country Programme Outcome. This is in line with the new UNDP Evaluation guidelines dated January 2019.

During the current programme cycle 2014-2019, an Independent Evaluation was conducted with satisfactory results. All the recommendations have been included in the new CPD 2020-2024.* ***They will be used to***:
	+ Gather evidences on specific UNDP Cuba’s contributions to national development targets in line with the 2030 National Development Plan and the 2030 SDGs achievements.
	+ Improve UNDP Cuba’s and Projects learning and organizational performance.
	+ Identify and share best practices and lessons learnt relevant to the Cuban context.
	+ Timely inform the decision-makers to take adequate corrective actions regarding the implementation of the UNDP Country Programme and Projects, in the framework of the Cuba’s updating economic and social model.
	+ Support reporting processes to donors and counterparts and resources mobilization efforts
* ***Accountability***
	+ They are a key instrument to evidence UNDP’s Cuba added value in supporting national development priorities and promoting sustainable human development, since they are conducted by third parties that gather credible data on UNDP’s contributions to development results and on the progress made regarding development targets.

They are also a crucial instrument to demonstrate the efficient use of resources in support of national development targets and to feed into donors reporting. In terms of learning, they are a highly valuable exercise to identify best practices, innovations and opportunities to scale-up interventions that are relevant to the Cuban context.  * ***Monitoring and Evaluation information***
	+ Based on the M&E information, knowledge management products will be produced, best practices systematize and they will be used to promote South-South cooperation and to extend good practices across the country.
	+ In support of the resource mobilization strategy, and based on the development opportunities identified through M&E new innovative development interventions will be formulated and implemented.
* ***Share of Programme Budget***
	+ A minimum of 5% of programme budget is planned to be allocated to M&E
* ***Key area of development in M&E***
	+ Internally: Continue applying the new corporate M&E methodologies and quality assurance instruments in place
	+ In alliance with key national counterparts:
		- Continue supporting the national statistical system to develop more robust information and statistics in line with the updating of the Cuban model, under international, disaggregated, gender-sensitive standards
		- Continue supporting national counterparts with access to instruments for articulation of and follow-up to the SDGs
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| **Comments by the U.S.A.** | **Country Office response** |
| * Page 2: 4. Externally, the global economic and financial context and the intensification of the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America substantially affect the country and limit its access to international financial sources and markets. Cuba considers that the blockade policy poses a major obstacle to the implementation of the National Economic and Social Development Plan and of the 2030 Agenda – including the 17 Sustainable Development Goals – by 2030.

**Comment**: Cuba’s claim that the U.S. embargo limits Cuba’s access to international financial sources and markets is false.  Cuba continues to take advantage of other countries’ willingness to lend, but poor economic management means it is unable to meet its debt payment obligations, leading to the accumulation of hundreds of millions in arrears.  Cuba’s claim that the U.S. embargo poses an obstacle to Cuba’s economic and social development plan is inaccurate.  Cuba’s economic and financial situation is the result of economic mismanagement on the part of the Cuban regime.  Rather than focus on blaming the United States for its economic failures, the Cuban regime would do better to focus its efforts on much-needed reforms.  While Cuba blames the United States for food shortages, under the regime’s cumbersome and inept central planning system, annual outputs of basic crops such as sugar have fallen to rates not seen in decades.  Actual exports from the United States to Cuba in 2018 exceeded US$275 million ($275,878,000) and have only increased in 2019.   This year, U.S. exports to Cuba through September 2019 already exceed $271 million ($271,100,000).  Since January 2018, the U.S. Department of Commerce has authorized over $16 billion worth of exports to Cuba, over $12 billion of which were food and other agricultural commodities.  Of this, Cuba only imported 3 percent of what was authorized; the decision whether to purchase the products is up to the Cuban government.  Since 2001, the United States has exported $6 billion worth of food and agricultural products to Cuba.  Other goods authorized included medicines, medical devices, telecommunications equipment, consumer goods, and other items to support the Cuban people.* Page 3: The development model is being updated and, after a broad process of consultation, the new Constitution was approved in 2019 to legitimize citizens’ rights, promote recognition of and respect for family diversity, and improve ways of coping with gender violence situations.

**Comment**: We would disagree with the characterization that there was a broad process of consultation prior to the new Constitution being approved. The constitutional referendum in February was undemocratic and flawed.  In particular, we noted a spike in repression and arbitrary arrests in the weeks leading up to the referendum.  | Noted and transmitted |

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| **Cuba's Response to the comments of the U.S. Delegation on the Country Programme Document for Cuba (2020 - 2024)** | **Country Office response** |
| The comments of the Government of the United States on the Country Programme Document for Cuba 2020- 2024, constitute a new maneuver to thwart international cooperation with Cuba. The United States persists in its objective to bring the Cuban people to their knees by causing hunger and despair and to destroy their political system, chosen in a sovereign manner**.**Cuba does not hide the economic problems the country faces as a result, *inter alia*, of the deformations associated with development and centuries of deformations associated with underdevelopment and centuries of colonialism, neo-colonialism and unjust international economic relations.Yet, the multimillion dollar economic damage accrued for nearly 60 years indicate that the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by Government of the United States against Cuba, without a shadow of a doubt, is the main obstacle to Cuba's economic and social development, as well as to the implementation of the National Economic Development Plan and, therefore, to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.As a result of the blockade, Cuba must carry out its commercial operations under extremely disadvantageous conditions. Its financial transactions are persecuted with rage and those banks that conduct any type of transaction of funds related to our country are fined.If Cuba has resisted, if our economy has overcome all these obstacles, it has been due to the heroic resistance of the Cuban people.In order to achieve the development goals that we have set ourselves, the lifting of the blockade would represent a relief that would allow the Cuban economy and people to fully develop their capacities under normal conditions.With the foregone income from exports of goods and services and the costs associated with the geographical relocation of the trade, which forces us to have very high inventories in place, GDP would have soared up, at current prices in the last decade, at an average annual rate of about 10%. | Noted |
| **On the impacts of the blockade on Cuba's access to international financial sources and markets:*** It is cynical and ironical that the Government of the United States asserts that the blockade does not affect Cuba's access to international sources of financing.
* The U.S. economic siege is the main hindrance for Cuba to obtain international credits, due to the impossibility of using the U.S. dollar in its transactions, the deterrent effect of the numberless sanctions and threats of retaliation against financial institutions, and the resulting increase in the country risk factor.
* The deceitful and false arguments of the United States Government are based on the strategy of making the Blockade be viewed as a strictly bilateral issue. However, during Donald Trump's administration alone, more than a hundred events have been recorded that constitute flagrant extraterritorial applications of the blockade and that have added extraordinary difficulties to our international financial and commercial activity.
* Cuba's commercial and financial operations are subject to constant and thorough persecution, by legislative mandate, specifically the 1996 Helms-Burton Act. The refusal of banks to conduct transactions with Cuba, the closing of our accounts in third countries and the termination of contracts reflect the extraterritoriality and the deterrence that the policy of the blockade generates.
* Recently, the United States has launched an extensive persecution and imposed sanctions against more than 60 vessels and companies involved in the shipment of fuel to Cuba. Based on unfounded pretexts, the U.S. Government has tightened these economic sanctions with the open purpose of damaging our economy. It is evident that the blockade remains the main hindrance to Cuba's economic development, which has an impact on all spheres of society.
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| **On the alleged exports of authorized goods from the United States to Cuba:*** U.S. regulations and laws (such as the 1963 Department of the Treasury Cuban Assets Control Regulations, the 1979 Export Administration Act, and the 2000 Trade Sanctions Reform and Exports Enhancement Act, among others), determine that the import into Cuba of authorized products from the United States is subject to discriminatory conditions that are not applied to any other country in the world.
* According to the complex regulatory framework of the blockade, Cuba is forced to pay in advance, i.e. the amount must be received by the supplier even before the goods are shipped. Additionally, payment must be made in cash and there is no possibility of accessing credits. All these are conditions, which are impossible to meet as a whole for a small developing country like ours.
* These obstacles hinder and sometimes prevent the realization of projects that have the noble purpose of contributing to the objectives of UN agencies and programs, such as UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF.
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| **On the process of adoption the new Constitution of the Republic of Cuba:*** The elaboration, adoption and ratification of the new Constitution of the Republic of Cuba was a genuinely popular and democratic exercise. The new Constitution was ratified by popular referendum on February 24, 2019, through the favorable vote of 86.85% of the voters.
* Each citizen, at the time of exercising their right to vote, had two options before them: To ratify or not the new Constitution. The overwhelming majority of Cubans, 8 out of 10 voters, ratified the new Constitution with their free and secret vote.
* Previously, during 2018, the draft Constitution was submitted to an extensive process of popular consultation, which included 133,681 meetings in workplaces, education centers and communities. This process involved 8,945,521 people out of a population of just over 11 million.
* At these consultation meetings, the people had the opportunity to express not only their endorsement of or disagreement with, in whole or in part, the draft Constitution, but they could also propose direct amendments, including additions or deletions, and express doubts.
* In the process of consultation, our people made 1,706,872 statements, out of which 783,174 were proposals related to the text discussed. On the basis of those proposals, almost 60% of the draft Constitution was modified. The text ratified in the referendum was modified according to the process of popular consultation.
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| **On the alleged existence of arbitrary detentions in Cuba:*** Arbitrary detentions are not enforced in Cuba. Arrests are carried out in accordance with current law of criminal procedure and in compliance with the broad guarantees of the due process established by our legal system.
* The Law lays down the procedures and circumstances requiring detention, as well as the terms under which a detainee must be subject to precautionary measures, be instituted criminal proceedings or be released.
* Detentions are carried out in compliance with all the guarantees and formalities laid down in Law No. 62 of 1989, "Criminal Code", regardless of the political opinion of the person in custody.
* The decision whether or not to continue the criminal process is evaluated in each case by the competent authorities, in observance of all the guarantees recognized by our laws; and is based on the application of a rational, objective, preventive and individualized criminal policy.
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