

**The normalisation of the relations between the European Union and Cuba
and the chances in the field of development cooperation**

Conference organised by:

**Group for the Friendship and Solidarity with the People of Cuba and Grupo
Sur**

26th May 2008

Room TBC

Interpretation: Spanish, French, English, German, Portuguese and Greek

Last September, the Group for the Friendship and Solidarity with the People of Cuba of the European Parliament, and the net of European development cooperation NGOs called Grupo Sur, organised a Conference on the subject " *The EU's policy towards Cuba: Heading for a relationship of mutual respect*". That meeting had a significant impact and showed important understanding from different points of view about the need to normalise the relations between the European Union and Cuba on the basis of mutual respect. It was generally understood that such a normalisation would provide a favourable framework for a joint work in favour of the Millennium Development Goals.

Since then until now, a number of facts and events show that there is a positive climate to go forwards toward the normalisation of the referred EU-Cuba relations: explanatory talks between the European Union Troika and Cuba at ministerial level were held in New York on September 24th 2007; Cuba took part in the European Development Days organised in Lisbon in November 2007; two technical missions of DG Development of the European Commission visited Cuba recently; later, there have been high level missions to Havana by two political Groups of the European Parliament (Socialist Group and European United Left); furthermore, we have had a visit to Cuba by the European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid of the European Union, Louis Michel, from 7th to 9th March, 2008.

It is in view of all this, that the Group for the Friendship and Solidarity with the People of Cuba and the net of European development cooperation NGOs -Grupo Sur- have considered that it was reasonable to repeat last year's exercise, calling for a new Conference which will allow us to produce a constructive discussion on the chances which normalised relations between the EU and Cuba might offer for development cooperation in its bilateral, trilateral and multilateral dimensions, always favouring a joint mobilisation in favour of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

Out of this Conference, the organisers intend:

- To keep alive a reflexion and commitment space for those responsible for political decisions and for other actors enjoying field experience and technical knowledge, on the issues to be dealt with. The challenge will be to explore the added value which fluent relations between the European Union and Cuba will bring to international development cooperation, in the interest of the EU, of Cuba and for other developing countries, all of it by promoting a joint commitment for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.
- To call the attention of the Foreign Ministers European Council, which has foreseen to examine the issue of Cuba in its meeting of next June. Our Conference should give good arguments to justify how much the referred normalisation of relations between the EU and Havana, does require the formal elimination of these sanctions -so far suspended- which were adopted towards Cuba in 2003. The elimination of these sanctions will make it possible to make progress in the fields of cooperation and political dialogue.

People wishing to participate at our Conference should fill the form enclosed by and send it to:

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Until May 16th, otherwise the entrance at the European Parliament will not be guaranteed.