

## RESOLUTION 43

# Supporting the Repeal of U.S. Travel Restrictions to Cuba and of the U.S. Economic Embargo

Submitted by Metropolitan Washington Council (D.C.)

Referred to the International Labor Committee

**WHEREAS**, our unilateral economic embargo against Cuba is the harshest we maintain against any country in the world and is ineffective. The United Nations has voted 17 times passing resolutions for the removal of the trade embargo and condemning its negative impacts. The leaders of the Caribbean regional trade bloc, known as CARICOM, have called on U.S. President Barack Obama to lift the decades-old trade embargo against Cuba; and

WHEREAS, our Cuba policy is an obstacle to striking a new relationship with the nations of Latin America and the Caribbean. Virtually all countries in the Americas have diplomatic ties with Cuba. Numerous Latin American presidents have visited Havana in the past months to publicly underscore how Washington's policy is out of sync with the rest of the Western Hemisphere and Cuba was a key part of the agenda at the 5th Summit of the Americas in April 2009 in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago; and

WHEREAS, bipartisan legislators have long since called attention to the negative impacts of the economic embargo on Cuba. Recently, legislators in the U.S. House and Senate have introduced legislation (H.R. 874 and S. 428), "The Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act," which proposes the repeal of all travel restrictions against the rights of all Americans to travel to Cuba. The legislation would prevent the president from stopping travel to Cuba by all Americans except in cases of war, imminent danger to public health or threats to the physical safety of U.S. travelers; and

WHEREAS, civil society leaders throughout the Caribbean and Latin America have condemned the detrimental impacts (including limited access to resources, technology, intellectual, cultural and social advances) of the embargo on the vast majority of Cuban citizens; and

WHEREAS, several polls of Cuban-Americans taken in the past two years, by institutions such as Florida International University, demonstrate increased demand for some form of engagement with Cuba, and declining support for restrictions on travel and remittances; and

WHEREAS, attempts by the U.S. to marginalize Cuba's engagement with the global economic community have significantly limited Cuba's growth. The Cuban government estimates the loss to Cuba at about \$685 million annually and well-established research shows the negative impacts in Cuba have disproportionately hurt Afro-Cubans, women, children and the poor; and

WHEREAS, diverse U.S. stakeholders in business, politics and civil society see enormous potential for agricultural trade and U.S.-Cuba exchanges of biotech and medical equipment, as well as student exchanges. Since Congress approved an exception to the embargo in 2000 for some U.S. businesses, Cuba has bought \$2.6 billion in U.S. food; and

WHEREAS, U.S.-Cuba policy has failed—it denies U.S. citizens their fundamental and constitutional rights to travel, it cuts off Cubans from

information and the opportunity to interact with American citizens and it prevents people in the United States from being exposed to the cultural diversity and intellectual achievements of Cuban society;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the AFL-CIO support the effort to increase the economic remittance that can be made to family members residing in Cuba; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the AFL-CIO support the effort to end travel restrictions on Americans seeking to visit Cuba; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the AFL-CIO calls upon Congress to initiate legislation that would repeal the economic embargo against the Republic of Cuba and broaden diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the AFL-CIO call upon Cuba to release all political prisoners, including trade unionists, and enter a meaningful dialogue with regard to broadening human and workers' rights.