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NOTE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL ADVISING OF THE POSTPONEMENT OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL CONVENED FOR JULY 28, 2021, TO ADDRESS THE SITUATION IN CUBA

The Chair of the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States has the honor to address the Honorable permanent missions of the member states of the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States (OAS) regarding the convocation of the special meeting announced for Wednesday, July 28, to address the matter of “The Situation in Cuba.”

In that connection, and since interventions appertaining thereto have been received from countries, this Chair wishes to advise that the above-mentioned meeting has been postponed in order to make any consultations that may be useful so that it may be held as soon as possible.

I wish to advise in that regard that I have requested the Secretariat for Legal Affairs of the Organization to provide a report on the situation in Cuba vis-à-vis the OAS. That report will be shared with the delegations as soon as it is available.

The events in Cuba do not admit of delays. We are talking about deprivations of the liberty of hundreds and of impact on human rights, and we have a moral obligation not to look away from and ignore these needs. The clock is ticking for the protection of human rights and the lives of many. It would seem inappropriate to fail to address this situation. It would be meet to act swiftly.

In view of the events, it should be noted that, insofar as it was within the purview of this Chair, based on the instruments corresponding to its sphere of competence, and in faithful fulfillment of the Rules of Procedure at hand, this Chair, at two prior meetings of the Permanent Council, underscored that it was essential to know what was happening in Cuba, to delve deeper with precise and technical information on the human rights violations ongoing there, and it was therefore deemed relevant for the source of that information to be the organs with the corresponding competence and jurisdiction. Information was requested from those with responsibility to report. A declaration was not proposed. The Commissioners were simply requested to report in this regard.

Ignoring the events in Cuba does not mean that the dramatic facts will come to an end. Sadly, the reality is running its course. It is not hiding behind paper, declarations, or delays.

The President of the IACHR, Commissioner Antonia Urrejola, has reliable information and a historical report substantiating her actions since 2020. The Commissioner specializing in Cuba, Stuardo Ralón, has also prepared different reports on the topic, and it would also be a priority to hear the voice of the Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, Pedro Vaca, all in a position to report on what has in fact been occurring. It is worth recalling Article 53.e.

If the Commissioners’ press releases have been read, a mere glance would suffice to note the gravity and drama of the events to which they refer. It would have been irresponsible on the part of the Chair to ignore the issues they raise. That reality is a fact and is ongoing. If one wishes to take cognizance of it, it is a merely a matter of arranging for the presence of these actors as soon as possible.

It is the intent of this Chair to make headway with this matter in the coming days. The practice of rejecting “word of mouth” reports should have no place in this organization.

The asymmetry of international perspectives is always detrimental to respect for human rights. The rights of Cubans are worth as much as those of any other country of our organization, and we must ever strive to defend them. Moreover – in the view of this Chair – in regimes such as the Cuban, closer attention still should be paid to human rights.

That said, I consider it necessary to note that the objection to receiving technical reports prepared by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights regarding the situation in Cuba is particularly unusual, especially when that organization has so often reported to this body without further ado. Just a few weeks ago, the last Chair processed a similar matter regarding another country.

As the Honorable permanent missions are aware, the IACHR prepares annual reports regarding the situation in Cuba, which is part of the routine operations of the Organization.

I am certain that these considerations will be relevant for the upcoming treatment of the matter of "The Situation in Cuba" in the Permanent Council.

The Chair of the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States takes this opportunity to convey to the Permanent Missions of the member states of the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States renewed assurances of his highest consideration.

The Permanent Missions of the

 Organization of American States

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