

MEDICUBA-EUROPA CAMPAIGN 2015, TWO DECADES OF SOLIDARITY WITH CUBA

Dear Friends:

mediCuba-Europa is since its foundation **the only European-wide network of Cuba solidarity organisations focusing on health**. We are made up of groups from 13 countries who share the common objective of defending, supporting and collaborating with the Cuban National Public Health System. mediCuba-Europa will shortly have reached the milestone of 20 years of continuous solidarity with Cuba, an achievement we wish to celebrate through further collaboration and further solidarity.

In 2013 we opened an office in Havana, run by Manuel Vanegas. This enables us to improve the regularity of liaison with our projects in Cuba, and further develop relationships with our partners in the various Cuban institutions.

In recent years we have defined our solidarity work under **five key headings**, which reflect well the new reality under which Cuba is living:

Supporting drug production in Cuba: through the provision of raw materials (chemical and pharmaceutical) and equipment, via support projects for the Cuban chemical and medical-pharmaceutical industries (themselves within the framework of the National Plan for Import Substitution), and through or support enabling Cuba to bypass the restrictions of the US Blockade, which has a considerable impact on Cuba's ability to obtain medicines. Our current **2015** campaign plans the purchase and distribution to Cuba of raw materials to produce the latest generation of psychopharmaceuticals, this project forms part of a broader child psychiatry support project set up by mediCuba-Switzerland.

Support to the Cuban National Institute of Oncology and Radiobiology (INOR). Through: cancer research projects, the supply of technology and equipment, facilitating professional interchanges, training and information sharing. Activities being taken forward in **2015** include a training programme for INOR personnel through a project entitled the "Intelligent Hospital" and the setting up of a new project entitled "Information systems for Medical Cancer Services".

Support for scientific development in Cuba: cooperation projects to assist the development of Cuba's 'science park', (Polo científico) in particular in the biotechnology field through collaboration with the Centre of Molecular Immunology (CIM) which produces vaccines and antibodies; and the Centre for Research and Development of Medicines (CIDEM), which develops and produces a variety of medicines including, anti-asthmatic and cancer drugs. Into **2015** the focus is on supporting specialist training for CIM personnel in molecular biology methodologies. mediCuba-Europa's objective with this project is to further the relevance and highlight the importance of research in Cuba not only for the Cuban population but also for dozens of other countries, mostly impoverished, which Cuba exports its technologies to at favourable prices. Such medical produces also constitute an important source of income for Cuba.

Emergency actions against the US blockade: One of the most inhumane elements of the blockade imposed by the US government against Cuba is the impossibility of obtaining certain vital medicines for children suffering serious illnesses, including cancer. mediCuba-Europa supports action which mitigates against this, through the supply of anti-tumoral paediatric medicines, as well as through research and development of Cuba (end-product) pharmaceuticals for the treatment of cancer in children. Into **2015** this year's campaign will continue financial support for both such research and development activities as well as the supply of anti-tumoral paediatric medicines, in accordance with the priorities set out by the INOR.

Supporting Cuba's solidarity with other peoples mediCuba-Europa contributes, through provision of material support (in the form of equipment and technology) with Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM) in Havana. The ELAM is an extraordinary educational solidarity initiative by Cuba with the rest of the world, an example of both south-south cooperation and internationalist solidarity. In **2015**, mediCuba-Europa is in the process of developing a new cooperation project with the ELAM.

The above consists of a range of coordinated and complimentary activities designed to ensure our interventions are as **effective and strategic** as they can be in the present economic context where there are more limited resources, yet nevertheless opportunities to ensure our input fully reaches its potential.

THE CURRENT CONTEXT OF CHANGES IN CUBA AND THE COMMITMENT OF MEDICUBA-EUROPA

There have been significant developments in Cuba in recent months, following the announcement that there will be a negotiated settlement with the agreed goal of the normalisation of political and diplomatic relations with the US. This is an historic, long desired and much needed moment in the struggle to remedy the injustice Cuba has faced. Unfortunately despite such developments the criminal economic blockade of Cuba still remains in place, and must constitute the most significant obstacle to be overcome as part of a normalisation process.

In relation to the potential economic changes this new situation could however bring Cuba has the asset of the high level of scientific development and technology it has, especially in the health sector, above all as it can rely on highly qualified and motivated professionals within its system. The sector is well regarded internationally, is growing, and can be harnessed to improve Cuba's overall economy. As Cuba can uniquely rely on the high level of development of this sector of its economy, which is much less costly than the services provided by transnational pharmaceutical companies, in the context of normalisation it could provide the island with a unique economic opportunity for its development as well as it being an asset to health and wellbeing across the planet.

The mediCuba-Europa network with its twenty year history of solidarity, collaboration and defence of the Cuban Health System, will continue as ever, and as never before, supporting the efforts Cuba makes, and standing alongside it in support of its social gains in the health and medicines, at this important time.

In order to continue our work, we need continued support from you, through participation in the network, supporting our projects, publicising our activities, or through donations to the mediCuba-Europa 'common fund' which allows our solidarity work with Cuba to be sustainable.

Your help, however modest, is essential and makes a significant contribution to Cuba being an example to the world! Muchas gracias!

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