

**P R E S S   R E L E A S E**

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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union**  
**on the outcome of the trial against the four members of**  
**the "Internal Dissidence Working Group" in Havana, Cuba**

1. With regret, the European Union has learnt the outcome of the trial against the four members of the "Internal Dissidence Working Group". According to reports, the following sentences were passed : against Mr. Vladimiro Roca Antunez, five years of imprisonment; Mr. Felix Antonio Bonne Carcasses, four years; Mr. Rene de Jesus Gomez Manzano, four years; Ms. Marta Beatriz Roque Cabello, three and a half years of imprisonment.
2. This group exercised the freedom of expression, which is a universally recognised human right, and the European Union cannot accept that citizens who do so be criminalised by state authorities. At the same time, the EU rejects judicial proceedings of a political nature. In this context, the EU wishes to reiterate its objective in its relations with Cuba, namely to encourage a process of transition to pluralist democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as expressed in its Common Position of 2 December 1996.
3. The European Union deeply regrets that its repeated appeals for the unconditional release of the four members of the "Internal Dissidence Working Group" have been ignored. It wishes to recall that it expressed already in 1998 its expectation that the four would be released when responding positively to Cuba's request for observer status at the negotiations between the EU and the ACP countries.

4. The EU therefore repeats its calls for the prompt release of the four and will continue to evaluate the development of this matter. The EU notes that Cuban legislation provides for the alleviation of sentences in certain circumstances.
  5. At the same time, the EU and its member states reiterate their grave concern about the events surrounding the trial, in particular the temporary detention and house arrest of several dozens of persons as well as the cutting of their telephone lines. Furthermore, the EU wishes to express its deep disappointment about the fact that neither diplomats nor international media representatives were allowed to attend the trial, although family members of the defendants had been informed about its allegedly "public" nature.
  6. Finally, the EU is deeply concerned about certain provisions of the recent modifications of Cuba's penal legislation which further curtail the exercise of citizens' rights.
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