A VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF CUBAN TRADE UNIONISM

Independent Trade Union Association of Cuba

In the event of political change in Cuba, against a backdrop of necessary international pressure and the need for swift action to advance a democratic transition, the independent trade union movement reaffirms that the future of work and democracy on the island must be shaped by active citizen participation and institutional safeguards, with full respect for the will of the Cuban people.

1. Our Vision

The Cuban trade union movement of the future will be free, pluralistic, democratic, and autonomous: an organized social movement representing workers in the public, private, cooperative, and self-employed sectors, with a genuine ability to negotiate, defend workers' rights, and participate in national reconstruction. We envision a country where work is no longer associated with fear and where prosperity rests on rights, productivity, and social justice.

2. Non-Negotiable Principles

a) Effective freedom of association: the right to establish and join trade unions without prior authorization, monopolies, or state interference.

b) Pluralism and internal democracy: free trade union elections, transparency, accountability, and the right to recall elected representatives.

c) Genuine collective bargaining: agreements at the enterprise and sectoral levels, negotiated in good faith, with basic transparency regarding their outcomes and effective mechanisms for resolving disputes.

d) The right to strike and protest peacefully: legitimate means of collective action, subject to rules that safeguard these rights and never to criminalization.

e) Protection against retaliation: zero tolerance for harassment, politically motivated dismissals, surveillance, or persecution for trade union activity.

f) Tripartite social dialogue: participation by the State, employers, and representative, independent workers' organizations under clear and verifiable rules.

3. Priorities for the First 24 Months of the Transition

Recognizing the need for a clear initial roadmap for the country's transition and institutional reconstruction, we propose a Labor Reconstruction Agenda comprising immediate, verifiable measures, including:

i. Immediate Guarantees

- Release of trade unionists and workers penalized for exercising labor rights, together with the initiation of restorative justice processes and comprehensive reparations.

- Repeal of laws, regulations, and practices that obstruct trade union pluralism and have, to date, allowed independent organizations such as the Independent Trade Union Association of Cuba (ASIC) to be excluded.
- Establishment of an expedited legal registration process for independent trade unions, federations, and confederations, with due process safeguards, effective judicial review, and international assistance.

ii. New Emergency Labor Framework

- Adoption of a transitional labor law guaranteeing, among other rights, freedom of association, collective bargaining, the right to strike, non-discrimination, occupational safety and health, and access to an impartial labor justice system.
- Establishment of an independent labor inspectorate focused on prevention, with proportionate enforcement powers and protections for those who report violations.

iii. Social Pact for Employment and Income

- Establishment of a pluralistic, tripartite National Council for Social Dialogue and Agreement to address issues such as the minimum wage, the formalization of employment, economic recovery, social protection, and the orderly transition of state-owned enterprises.
- Development of an income protection and workforce retraining program, with priority given to essential services such as health care, education, agriculture, and energy.

iv. Truth, Remembrance, and Prevention of Further Violations in the World of Work

- Establishment of a public initiative to document violations of labor and trade union rights, with the involvement of international organizations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO).
- Design and implementation of mechanisms for reparation and prevention of new violations, with victims' participation and international support.

4. The Role of Independent Trade Unions in Reconstruction

ASIC pledges to promote democratic stability and social peace, prevent the labor movement from being brought under partisan control, and reject violence as a means of expressing dissent. Our role will be to:

- Continue defending rights and safeguards while maintaining channels for negotiation to prevent conflicts from escalating.
- Promote trade union training, productivity consistent with workers' rights, and occupational safety and health.
- Support initiatives to formalize employment and include self-employed workers and emerging forms of enterprise.
- Build ties with the diaspora, international trade union networks, and multilateral organizations to foster technical cooperation and establish safeguards.

5. Final Appeal

We call on Cuban workers, both on the island and abroad, to organize calmly, with unity in diversity and a firm commitment to democracy. Any transition must be orderly, grounded in legal safeguards, and centered on

rights, because there can be no genuine democracy without freedom of association and no sustainable nation without decent work.

We therefore call on the international trade union movement—including national trade union centers, sectoral federations, and workers' organizations across all continents—to stand firmly and in meaningful solidarity with Cuban workers and, in particular, with the Independent Trade Union Association of Cuba, through public support, technical cooperation, and sustained monitoring of any persecution or retaliation.

The defense of labor rights and trade union freedoms must not be subject to political convenience, geopolitical alignments, or ideological considerations. When human dignity, freedom of association, collective bargaining, and the protection of workers are at stake, the same standard must apply equally to everyone. Human rights, like workers' rights, know no borders or political allegiances.

Thus, ASIC reaffirms that the Cuban trade union movement of the future will be part of the solution, guided by independence, historical responsibility, and a commitment to national reconstruction.

Iván Hernández Carrillo
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Independent Trade Union Association of Cuba (ASIC)

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