

**Written submission on Cuba's Universal Periodic Review**  
**by the Progressive Women's Movement POGO**

1. The Progressive Women's Movement of POGO (Pancyprian Federation of Women's Organisations), a non- governmental organization, was founded in 1959 to replace the Pancyprian Organisation of Democratic Women established in 1950. POGO is recognized as one of the main women organizations in Cyprus the activities of which focus on gender equality and human rights. It is also one of the most active pro-solutionist organisations and a protagonist in the common struggle of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot women for peace in Cyprus. POGO is registered as a union based on the provisions of the Law on Unions and Institutions (104(I)/2017) (registration number: ΑΕΥ/Σ/0304)
2. Simultaneously, POGO is an active member of the WIDF (Women's International Democratic Federation) and it currently serves as Vice-President for a fourth term in a row. It maintains an active position in the global progressive women's movement by its constructive contribution to WIDF and involvement in several bilateral and regional activities. In fact, POGO recognizes the value of global solidarity for all suffering women, regardless of their country of origin, through its work and actions on a global scale. More specifically, it acknowledges the importance of global solidarity in the face of social injustice, repression, and war.
3. As POGO, we want to offer our perspective on Cuba's Universal Periodic Review. Based on both our relationship with the UN and our genuine interest in and concern for the protection of human rights, including gender equality, worldwide, we feel firmly that we must add our own stance to the discussion.
4. Our written response is based on our personal first-hand accounts from the numerous occasions we have visited to Cuba for different reasons and goals. Additionally, it is based on ongoing research into Cuba's post-revolutionary experience with respect to gender equality and the empowerment of women.
5. We note that given the challenging political environment in which it has been accomplished, Cuba's success in the aforementioned areas is of exceptional significance. Cuba is a country that has endured dreadful embargoes and harsh diplomatic retaliation for its political stance for many

years. Cuba has yet managed to develop gender equality admirably despite the economic setback it has experienced.

6. Unlike what the media promote, Cuba holds regular elections in which the populace is actively involved. All Cuban citizens—men and women—have equal access to the highest public positions in the country's electoral system, based on their qualifications and merits rather than their socioeconomic status, financial resources, or gender.
7. As the numbers reveal, Cuba has outpaced the majority of developed states in the political empowerment of women. Cuba is the second country in the world in terms of women's participation in Parliament (more than 55% in the new legislature), second only to Rwanda, whereas countries like Germany (23<sup>rd</sup> place) and the USA (104<sup>th</sup> place) are far below. Similarly, Cuba appears among the states where women hold numerous high-level ministerial positions. Additionally, women's participation in decision-making is growing. At the end of the first quarter of 2021, women represented 51.5% in State and Government positions. Moreover, women represent 52.3% of the members of the Council of State. 8 are female ministers and 30 are female vice ministers reaching a percentage of 48.5%. In the Council of Ministers, out of 34 members, 8 are women with the percentage reaching 23.5%. 10 out of 23 first deputy minister positions are held by women or a percentage of 43.5%. Regarding the elected governors and deputy governors, 53.3% are women. Most of these numbers are high above our country and most of the countries in our region.
8. It is underlined, that the advancement of women participation in the political and economic activities of the country, is not the result of electoral or hiring quotas, contrary to the example of other countries. Notwithstanding that there is always space for advancement, the progress of Cuba on gender equality reflects the progressive state of the social culture of its people as a whole.
9. Cuban women receive equal pay for equal work with men and have the right to a pension for total or partial invalidity, widow's pension, the right to land, to receive bank credits as well as paid leave and subsequent allowances, which women employees benefit before giving birth and until the child is one year old, at the same time offering fathers the possibility to use the same benefits following agreement between the couple and once breast-feeding period is over. This right, with the new modifications which have been approved, is extended to grandmothers and

grandfathers. Moreover, the childcare and semi-boarding system constitutes a support for the introduction of women to the economic life.

10. Women representation in economic life is of importance. The economic activity rate of women in Cuba is 53.2% while the unemployment rate is 1.6% (the lowest in the region). Of women employed, 78.5% work in the state sector and 35.4% are self-employed. All of them enjoy the abovementioned social guarantees.
11. Cuban laws protect women's right to decent employment and to non-discrimination in work and thus they are highly represented in key positions in Cuba. 63% of the professional union leaders in the country are women. The number is increased comparing with 2012 when it was 14% lower. They also represent 63.3% of provincial and municipal leaders. In the Ministry of Justice (MINJUS) system, 1 523 women are notaries, civil and property registrars, a percentage of 80% of the total. Additionally, 1,419 prosecutors are women or 80% of the total. 75% of the FGR's managerial positions are held by women. In terms of decision-making positions, the Attorney General and one Deputy Attorney General are held by women. 755 out of 932 judges of the country, thus a percentage of 81% are women while 75.4% (187/248) management positions in the court system are held by women.
12. Cuba's internal policies, legally founded on article 40 of the Constitution, which endorses in a rather specific manner the equality of men and women at all aspects of social activity, have targeted the education of women. Whereas before the 1959 revolution Cuba was one of the most developed and prosperous countries in Latin America, women made up only 5 percent of university graduates and 12 percent of the work force. Today, despite the economic regression caused mainly due to the policies of the USA, Cuba has provided its people with substantial and equal educational opportunities. This is reflected in women's education level: over 60% of higher education graduates are women; 71.2% of the science sector is female. They also represent 71.2 % in the health sector.
13. In addition to the respective provisions of the Cuban Constitution, there has been an ample and ongoing legislative activity in safeguarding and furthering the rights of women. Some examples are *Law No. 1289 of 14 February 1975*, *Law No. 49 of 28 December 1984*, *Labour Code*, *Right to Protection, Security and Hygiene of Work Law No.13 of 27 February 1977* and its

*Regulation, Law No.1263 of 16 January 1974, Maternity Law for the working woman, and following resolutions of 1991 and 2001, Bill 234 “of the maternity of the working woman of 13 August 2003, The Right-Law No.339 broadens and establishes new rights for the mother and father, for a the family and general, for the protection of maternity and the care of underage children, promotes larger integration of the family in the caring of the children and stimulates the permanence and reincorporation of the woman to her job. The larger benefit for the working mother: guarantee the care of her children by Ministerial Resolution 5/2017, directed to the service of boarding and semi-boarding in Primary Education, gives broader autonomy to the Councils of school Directions in order to carry out verification of applications, of granding and making public the granted capacities.*

14. Moreover, we would like to note that Cuba is a state party to numerous international instruments which, inter alia, have to do with the rights of women and girls. Some examples are the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; Convention on the Rights of the Child; Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the Sale of Children , Child Prostitution and Child Pornography; Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Participation of Children in Armed Conflict; International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid; UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education; Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries. Furthermore, in February of 2009, it ratified the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. More recently it has adhered to: the International Convention for the Protection of Persons from Enforced Disappearance (February 2, 2009); ILO Recommendation 200 concerning HIV and AIDS and the world of work (February 13, 2012); the UN Convention against Corruption (July 28, 2008).
15. The participation of Cuba in all the above-mentioned international instruments and Conventions is another indication of its sought level of cooperation and interaction with the United Nations and the international community in the field of human rights, including gender equality.
16. Despite the challenges the country has faced for more than 50 years, Cuba is always assisting nations in need. The Cuban assistance in the areas of health and education, which is especially

felt by women and girls, makes a concrete contribution to the protection of their rights and the spread of their empowerment. The contribution of Cuba assisting other countries in facing the pandemic is of importance.

17. Cuba continues to work to further measures for full gender equality and the empowerment of women in all areas of political, economic, and social life. In our opinion developed nations throughout the world should follow Cuba's lead in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment rather than taking actions that threaten the nation's stability and jeopardize the progressive accomplishments.