Press release

Brussels, 15 December 2020

**Cuba: Lead MEPs condemn harassment of Cuban activists participating in a European Parliament meeting**

**Statement by the Chair of the Delegation for relations with countries of Central America, Tilly Metz (Greens/EFA, LU), signed jointly with the Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, David McAllister (EPP, DE) and the European Parliament’s Vice-President, Heidi Hautala (Greens/EFA, FI)**

In reaction to the harassment of Cuban human rights activists, including 2005 Sakharov Prize winner Berta Soler, who were participating in an extraordinary remote meeting of the Delegation for relations with countries of Central America (DCAM) entitled “The Implementation of the Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and Cuba: state of play” last Friday (11 December 2020), [Tilly Metz](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/193292/TILLY_METZ/home), [David McAllister](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/124806/DAVID_MCALLISTER/home), and [Heidi Hautala](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/2054/HEIDI_HAUTALA/home) stated:

“We deplore the harassment by the Cuban security services of participants in that meeting, which took place last Friday, 11 December. The day before Sakharov Prize winner Berta Soler was supposed to speak at this remote meeting, she was arbitrarily arrested.

Ms Soler was released after several hours, but the obstruction of the meeting continued. Though advance tests of the internet connection with all participants in Cuba went well, surprisingly all connections except one went down right at the beginning of the event. After the meeting, the journalist Reinaldo Escobar, who participated via a video message, was detained for 5 hours and interrogated. On early Friday, José Daniel Ferrer, the General Coordinator of the Patriotic Union of Cuba (UNPACU), had a large number of State Security forces surrounding his house and his internet and phone connections were cut. He too had to participate in the EP meeting via video message.

These actions are unacceptable. The Constitution of the Cuban Republic, in its article 54, establishes that the State recognizes, respects and guarantees the freedom of thought, conscience and expression. We call upon the Cuban authorities to respect that constitutional right and to cease the ongoing harassment of Cuban citizens including those, who participated remotely in the DCAM meeting. This extends to the San Isidro movement, which is engaged in ensuring that cultural life in Cuba can happen without censorship.

During the meeting of the European Parliament, MEPs evaluated the progress made in the implementation of the EU-Cuba Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement (PDCA), which entered provisionally into force three years ago. DCAM Members are of the view that the above-mentioned actions undertaken by the Cuban authorities are clearly contrary to the very spirit and the values enshrined in this Agreement.”