

January 5, 2015

The Honorable Barack Obama

The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to commend you on the historic actions you are taking to update America's policy toward Cuba and Cuban citizens. Our new posture of engagement will advance our national interests and our values by empowering the Cuban people's capacity to work toward a more democratic and prosperous country--conditions that are very much in the U.S. interests. Many of the signers of this letter wrote to you earlier this year calling for exactly these types of changes. We appreciate that you not only recognized that the moment had come to act but did so boldly.

Both that original letter and this one are examples of the broad support these changes have from across the political spectrum. We may disagree on a number of issues, but we've found common ground for a simple reason; our fifty four-year old approach intended to promote human rights and democracy in Cuba has failed.

It has also been clear that the reforms you announced in 2009 have helped to build the foundation for positive change by helping Cuban-Americans reunite with and better support their families on the island. The free flow of information, improved communications, expanded remittances and commerce and support for Cuban civil society have also helped the Cuban people take greater ownership of their own lives. Access to the Internet and modern communications tools in today's world have become basic rights, because they are paramount to socioeconomic freedom and mobility.

Accordingly, we are encouraged by your declaration that the U.S. Government will continue to call on Havana to respect the human rights of the Cuban people. We applaud your guarantees that the UN Special Rapporteur for Torture and the International Red Cross will travel to the island. Your clear support for facilitating people-to-people engagement affirms the enduring belief that the American people are the best ambassadors of our values. We hope future efforts by the Administration will be matched by quick adoption of streamlined regulations that fulfill your intent and we will continue to monitor those developments. .

Bringing Alan Gross home to his loved ones was an indisputable testament to the power of principled diplomatic engagement. That same creativity in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges must be brought to the human rights arena, where recent experience shows the importance of transparent and principled approaches.

The Summit of the Americas presents one such opportunity. America should never shy away from defending and promoting our values, and your decision to attend the gathering in Panama was the correct one. After several decades in which democracy and the rule of

law have been strengthened throughout the hemisphere, the United States must continue to lead and challenge our partners to ensure that this region remains a beacon for human rights in the world.

Mr. President, we also call on you to work with Congress to update the legislative framework with regard to Cuba so that it too reflects 21st century realities. In the meantime, we look forward to continued progress in improving U.S.-Cuban cooperation on matters of national interest and stand ready to support this new policy of constructive engagement and U.S. outreach to the Cuban people.

Respectfully,