# Report on the official visit of a Parliamentary Delegation to the National Assembly of the People's Power of Cuba

September 01 to 07, 2024

# Table of Contents

Introduction ..... 3

Aim and objectives of the visit ..... 3

Summary of Activities ..... 4

Official Welcome ..... 4

Heroes Park Monument: Speaker of the House, Vice-President of the National Assembly and guests listen as the Charge d' Affaires a.i. and Head of Mission of the Embassy of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago delivers remarks ..... 5

Visit to Trinidad and Tobago Embassy in Havana ..... 5

Visit to the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment (CITMA) ..... 6

Visit to the Chamber of Commerce of the Republic of Cuba ..... 6

Meeting with President of the People's Power of Cuba ..... 18

Closing meeting with the Honourable President of the National Assembly ..... 30

Conclusion and Outcomes ..... 32

Appendices ..... 33

Appendix 1 ..... 34

Programme of Activities ..... 34

Appendix 2 ..... 41

Letter of Invitation ..... 41

Appendix 3 ..... 44

Letter of Intent Re: Formation of a Parliamentary Friendship Group between the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the National Assembly of the People's Power of Cuba ..... 44

Appendix 4 ..... 46

Matters for the consideration and potential input of the Executive ..... 46

# Introduction

1. By correspondence dated June 21, 2024, the Hon. Deputy Esteban Lazo Hernandez, President of the National Assembly of the People's Power of Cuba ("National Assembly"), invited the Hon. Bridgid Mary Annisette-George, MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives to undertake an official visit Cuba. (A copy of the Invitation Letter is attached in Appendix 2)

2. The Parliamentary delegation comprised the following persons:

    - Hon. Bridgid Mary Annisette-George, MP – Speaker of the House and Leader of the Delegation;
    - Hon. Lisa Morris-Julian, MP – Minister in the Ministry of Education;
    - Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh, MP – Member for Couva South;
    - Sen. Helon Francis – Independent Senator;
    - Mr. Julien Ogilvie – Deputy Clerk and Secretary to the Delegation.

## Aim and objectives of the visit

3. The official visit was intended to demonstrate the commitment of the legislatures to the deepening of parliamentary relations. It also served as an opportunity for both countries to explore additional areas of Parliamentary cooperation, including the creation of a ***Parliamentary Friendship Group*** which is intended to strengthen collaboration between the members of the National Assembly of Cuba and the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in mutual areas of interest.

4. In this regard, the visit was anchored on the following areas of mutual interest:

    a. Legislative and Procedural Guidance;
    b. Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality;
    c. Education;
    d. Culture and Sport;
    e. Health Sector Scrutiny;
    f. Disaster Preparedness and Resilience;
    g. Heritage Management;
    h. Sustainability.

5. A programme of activities undertaken by the delegation during the official visit is in **Appendix 1.**

6. This report is being presented in accordance with Standing Orders 22(6) and 21(6) of the House of Representatives and Senate, respectively.

# Summary of Activities

## Official Welcome

The delegation arrived in Cuba at the "José Martí" International Airport on Sunday September 01 2024 (1pm). The delegation was received by Hon. Ana María Mari Machado, Vice President of the National Assembly and Ms. Cindy Maharaj. Charge d' Affaires a.i. and Head of Mission of the Embassy of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in Havana. They were accompanied by other deputies of the National Assembly and staff of the Embassy.

Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is greeted by the Vice-President of the National Assembly of Cuba. Looking on is the Charge d' Affaires a.i. and Head of Mission of the Embassy of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

**Day 2: MONDAY- SEPTEMBER 2ND, 2024**

The official visit of the Honourable Speaker of the House of Representatives commenced with a Floral Wreath Laying Ceremony, which was hosted by the Embassy of Trinidad and Tobago and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cuba (MINREX) in commemoration of the 62nd Anniversary of Independence of the Republic of Trinidad

and Tobago. The ceremony was held at the Caribbean (CARICOM) Heroes Park in Havana.

Hon. Ana María Mari Machado, Vice President and members of the National Assembly, received the Honourable Speaker and the members of the delegation. The Independence Day Programme comprised a guard of honour and salute by the Cuban military ceremonial officers and the playing of the National Anthems of Trinidad and Tobago and Cuba.

Also in attendance were deputies of the National Assembly, Cuban Officials and Government Representatives of MINREX, Ambassadors, Heads of Mission, diplomatic representatives and Members of Staff of the Embassy of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in Havana.

Heroes Park Monument: Speaker of the House, Vice-President of the National Assembly and guests listen as the Charge d' Affaires a.i. and Head of Mission of the Embassy of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago delivers remarks

## Visit the Trinidad and Tobago Embassy in Havana

Following the wreath-laying ceremony, the delegation paid a courtesy visit to the Embassy of the Republic of Trinidad in Tobago, Havana. There, they met and engaged with staff members and obtained insights into the work the Embassy has undertaken on behalf of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Speaker and the other members of the delegation were invited to sign the visitor's book and a tour of the Embassy was conducted.

## Visit to the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment (CITMA)

The Honourable Speaker and delegation met with Ms. Odalys Goicochea Cardoso, Director General of the Ministry of Science and Technology and the Environment (CITMA) and other officials of that Ministry.

The Director General explained that although the institute experienced financial constraints, it was able to strengthen its national initiatives to adhere to the Paris Agreement to address climate change. He stated that Cuba had been experiencing higher storm frequencies and increased temperatures due to climate change. In this regard, the Director General explained that Cuba undertook measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, develop national resources /renewable energy and support disaster risk management policies through "the State Plan to Address Climate Change in the Republic of Cuba" or "Tarea Vida[1]" was adopted in April 2017[2].

A presentation entitled *"Cuba: a future resilient to climate change"* was made by the Director General. The presentation highlighted the specific strategies of the Government and emphasised that implementation of the "Tarea Vida" promoted broad citizen participation, which focuses on equity and social inclusion.

The Honourable Speaker thanked the Director General for the opportunity to meet during this important visit. She also expressed gratitude for the information shared regarding climate change and the environment. The Speaker acknowledged that climate change issues, such as rising sea levels and hurricane intensity, also affected the region's economies and exacerbated food security challenges. She pointed out that it was in our common interest to share experiences and best practices concerning climate change, disaster preparedness and resilience, noting that Small Island Developing States (SIDS) were disadvantaged due to its vulnerabilities.

## Visit to the Chamber of Commerce of the Republic of Cuba

The delegation then met with the President of the Chamber of Commerce of Cuba. At the meeting, Madam Speaker reiterated the long-standing trade linkages between Trinidad and Tobago and Cuba, particularly in manufacturing. Discussions also underscored the significant role that small and micro enterprises can play in strengthening trade activities between both countries and the importance of air transportation between both islands, which is currently facilitated by Caribbean Airlines

[1] English translation: " A Task for Life"

[2] Access the Plan:
https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/cu/79c4375d278252f07bb0c6398685ebbad412c2e4617b714647e83ec4168971a6.pdf

and COPA Airlines. The Chamber President also referred to Cuba's annual international trade fair and invited our manufacturers to attend and participate.

The delegation took special note of Cuba's "Green economy" initiatives, which included manufacturing artificial wood from waste material. This synthetic wood is used in coastal erosion projects.

**Visit to the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment**

The official agenda for the day concluded with a visit to the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment. In the absence of the substantial Minister, the delegation held discussions with Hon. Deborah Rivas Saavedra, Vice-Minister. During the meeting, Madam Speaker acknowledged the vital work being done between both countries to expand and deepen our trade relations. The delegation was informed that twenty (20) manufacturers from Trinidad and Tobago participated in Cuba's Trade Fair in 2023. In the context of CARICOM, the Vice-Minister highlighted that there is potential to boost cooperation in the area of maritime services.

The delegation meets with the Vice-Minister of Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment and other officials of the Ministry.

## Day 3: TUESDAY- SEPTEMBER 3rd, 2024

### Visit to the Monument of the National Hero "José Martí"

The day commenced with a wreath-laying ceremony at Revolution Square, the Monument of Jose Marti. Mr. Marti is credited with his significant contribution to Cuba's battle for independence from Spain and was also an inspiration for Fidel Castro's revolution to free Cuba from another era of dominance. The delegation received a guided tour of the facility. Thereafter, Madam Speaker signed the visitors' book.

The delegation at the lobby of the Monument of the National Hero "José Martí."

The delegation in the courtyard of the Monument of the National Hero “José Martí.”

**Official Welcome at the National Assembly of People's Power of the Republic of Cuba, National Capitolio.**

Upon our arrival at the Capitolio, the traditional home of the legislature, the delegation was received by the Honourable Deputy Esteban Lazo Hernandez, President of the National Assembly. A Guard of Honour was assembled, and the national anthem of both countries was played. President Lazo Hernandez then led a brief tour of the Capitolio, which included a visit to the historic Chamber of Deputies, which is no longer used.

The delegation, Honourable President and Deputies of the National Assembly at the Rotunda of the Capitolio

The National Assembly of People's Power is the supreme organ of State power. The Assembly is unicameral and is the only body with constituent and legislative power in Cuba. It comprises deputies elected by the free, equal, direct and secret vote of the electors, according to the procedure determined by law. According to Article 109 of the Constitution of the Republic, within the powers of the National Assembly of People's Power it is necessary to elect the President and the Vice President of the Republic. The Assembly is currently composed of 470 deputies who serve 5-year terms. Women constitute 55% of the Assembly's membership or 262 members and there are 208 men[3].

Cuba is a one-party state, and all candidates are nominated by government bodies controlled by the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC). No other political parties are officially recognised or permitted to operate in Cuba.

Discussions commenced with official statements presented by President Lazo Hernandez and Speaker Annisette-George. In her remarks, Speaker Annisette-George highlighted the main areas where she believed both Parliaments could achieve greater cooperation. These included:

a. Legislative and Procedural Guidance;
b. Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality;
c. Education;
d. Culture and Sport;
e. Health Sector Scrutiny;
f. Disaster Preparedness and Resilience;
g. Heritage Management;
h. Sustainability.

[3] https://data.ipu.org/parliament/CU/CU-LC01/

Madam Speaker delivering her presentation to the President and other deputies of the National Assembly

Speaker Annisette-George formally presented a letter to the President of the National Assembly proposing the formation of a ***Parliamentary Friendship Group*** between the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the National Assembly of the People's Power of the Republic of Cuba. A copy of this letter can be found in **Appendix 3.**

The Honourable Esteban Lazo Hernandez, President of the National Assembly delivers remarks. Looking on is the Honourable Ana María Mari Machado, Vice-President of the National Assembly

Madam Speaker commended President Lazo Hernandez on their success in maintaining the structural integrity and physical appearance of the Capitolio and the other national heritage buildings in Havana. In this regard, she was particularly interested in the role played by the Office of the Chief Architect which oversees these efforts. For example, the delegation was informed that the light fixtures in the Capitolio were over 100 years old but were still functional. Madam Speaker reflected on our experience in Trinidad and Tobago in maintaining our heritage infrastructure. She referenced the Red House building and the contributions made by Cuban artisans during its restoration which was completed in 2020.

Following formal proceedings at the Capitolio, the delegation was invited to lunch by President Lazo Hernández at Protocol House No. 18 in Laguito, where informal discussions continued.

**Presentation of the National Folklore Ensemble of Cuba**.

The delegation was then transferred to the Auditorium of the National Library to observe a presentation by the National Folklore Ensemble of Cuba. Founded in 1962, the group's mission is to undertake research and create and retain the Cuban people's indigenous folk and religious dances. The presentation was well received by the delegation. It was an excellent depiction of Cuba's rich and diverse cultural heritage and the benefit of targeted policies to preserve Cuban Culture and folklore.

Photo collage: Dance presentations of the National Folklore Ensemble

## Day 4: WEDNESDAY- SEPTEMBER 4th, 2024

### Special school "Solidarity with Panama"

*"Every Life is worthy and has a productive potential for the benefit of the whole society"* is the ethos of this special needs education centre which President Fidel Castro inaugurated on December 31, 1989. The school was designed for children from preschool to ninth grade and caters primarily for children with physical/motor disabilities. As of 2022, there were approximately 34,000 children with disabilities enrolled in special education schools[4]. Additionally, there are 342 special schools supported by an estimated 14,000 teachers. There are at least two similar schools throughout Cuba, located in Santiago de Cuba and Villa Clara[5].

**Photo Collage:** Members of the Delegation during their visit to the Special school "Solidarity with Panama"

[4] https://www.unicef.org/cuba/en/inclusive-education-in-cuba

[5] https://www.radiohc.cu/en/noticias/nacionales/210309-cuban-leaders-attend-the-30th-anniversary-celebration-of-solidarity-with-panama-special-school

Hon. Lisa Morris-Julian, Minister in the Ministry of Education, presented to the school's principal. In her brief remarks, she commended the school administrators for their love for and dedication to special needs education in Cuba. Comparing the services and amenities available at the centre with those available in Trinidad and Tobago, the Honourable Minister suggested that both countries could benefit from exchanging ideas regarding the delivery of special needs education.

The delegation toured the school and was accompanied by President Lazo Hernandez and other National Assembly officials.

**Visit at the Finlay Vaccine Institute**

A visit to the Finlay Vaccine Institute followed the visit to the special needs school. The Finlay Institute was created in 1991 with the aim of further expanding the achievement of a group of Cuban scientists who investigated, produced and presented a vaccine against Neisseria meningitidis[6]. The Institute is a scientific organisation created in honour of Dr. Carlos Juan Finlay, a renowned Cuban epidemiologist, who discovered that yellow fever is transmitted through an intermediate biological agent, capable of person-to-person transmission. This finding was essential to fight the disease, but more importantly, it served as the basis for research into what is known today as "vector-borne diseases."

Dr. C. Vicente Vérez Bencomo, General Director of the Center, delivered an in-depth and insightful presentation on the work of the Centre. Some of the notable aspects of the Centre's activities include:

a. developing vaccines, supported in the areas of Research and Development, Production, Clinical Evaluation and Marketing of products and technologies;

b. pioneering research on mosquito-borne illnesses;

c. producing three Cuban-based vaccines against the COVID-19 virus that have a high level of effectiveness;

d. the first large-scale production and clinical trials of a synthetic polysaccharide vaccine, against the Haemophilus influenzae type B bacterium.

[6] https://www.finlay.edu.cu/en/

The Delegation meets with the Director and other officials of the Finlay Vaccine Institute

**Visit to the Fidel Castro Center**

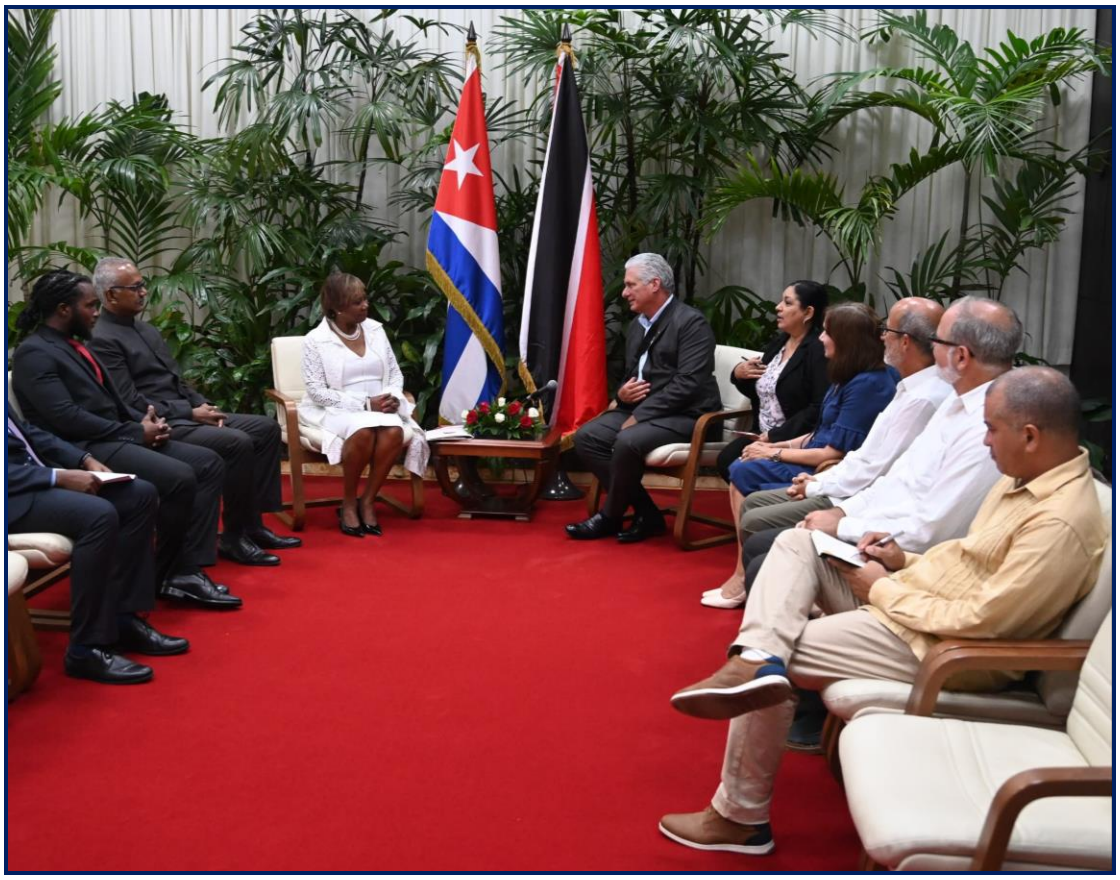
The delegation was honoured to be hosted by the Fidel Castro Center. The Centro is a museum, library, and research institution that welcomes people interested in researching Fidel Castro's life. The facility is meticulously designed and outfitted and features several chronological depictions of the life of Cuba's revered revolutionary and commander-in-chief, Fidel Castro. These depictions were expertly presented using several types of multi- and digital media technologies that allow visitors to interact directly with the items on display.

**Top photos:** Delegation tours the Fidel Castro Centre.
**Bottom photos**: Medal and awards bestowed on Fidel Castro along with Bust of Fidel Castro presented by China

## Meeting with President of the People's Power of Cuba

The day's activities concluded with a courtesy call on His Excellency, Miguel Diaz Canel, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba and President of the Republic, held at the Palace of the Revolution in Havana, Cuba.

Speaker Annisette-George expressed gratitude on behalf of the delegation, for the hospitality and courtesies extended by the Government and People of Cuba. She reiterated that the visit by this Parliamentary Delegation from the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago was a tangible demonstration of a strong interest in exploring opportunities for deepening cooperation between the legislative arms of our countries. Madam Speaker updated President Diaz Canel on the details and intended outcomes of the meeting held with the President of the National Assembly at the Capitolio on Tuesday 4th September.



Members of the delegation and Deputies of the National Assembly meet with
His Excellency Miguel Diaz Canel, President of Cuba

## Day 5: THURSDAY- SEPTEMBER 5th, 2024

The fifth day she commenced with a visit to the Mariel Special Development Zone. The Mariel Special Development Zone was officially opened in November 2013 and is a project aimed at attracting foreign direct investment critical for the local economy, while offering foreign investors opportunities to develop projects in several industrial fields. Mariel currently houses approximately 60 enterprises engaged in various commercial activities, including manufacturing, food production, construction supplies, renewable energy, tobacco and even tourism.

During the discussions, members of the delegation noted the similarities between Mariel and the Industrial Parks and Estates in Trinidad and Tobago. Of note was the extensive use of solar energy at Mariel, the capacity of which exceeded the demand of the zone's occupants. As such, this surplus is fed into the national electricity grid.

Photo Collage: Delegation meets with officials of the Mariel Special Development Zone

**Tour of Viñales Valley and other environmentally sustainable spaces**

The delegation then proceeded to the Vinales Valley. Viñales is located in the western region of *Sierra del Rosario*. Designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1999, the valley is recognised for its pristine landscape encircled by mountains and dotted with spectacular dome-like limestone outcrops (*mogotes*) that rise as high as 300 metres. Traditional methods of agriculture have survived essentially unchanged on this plain for several centuries, particularly for growing tobacco.

The delegation was honoured to be hosted by the Governor of the province of Pinar del Rio, Deputy Eumelin Gonzales-Sanchez and the Assembly representative for Vinales, Deputy Julio Emilio Morejón Pérez. Mr. Perez represented Cuba at the Regional Seminar for Parliaments of the Caribbean on Climate Change and Sustainable Development held in Port of Spain from May 27-29, 2024[7].

Delegation along with the Governor of the Province of Pinar del Rio and Assembly representative for Vinales at a local restaurant

[7] Regional Seminar for Parliaments of the Caribbean themed: Accelerating parliamentary action on climate change for a resilient and sustainable region, Jointly organised by the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Inter-Parliamentary Union held during the period 27-29 May 2024, Port of Spain

The delegation took particular interest in the environmentally sustainable activities and enterprises within the Vinales region. These included a locally operated restaurant with a menu that featured agricultural produce grown within the area. This was indicative of a forward linkage between the local agriculture industry and the tourism and hospitality sectors.

**Visit to Las Terrazas[8]**

The delegation also visited Las Terrazas, a small rural eco-community located in the eastern part of Sierra del Rosario, which covers the westernmost tip of the island. Las Terrazas represents a notable example of sustainable development in its most authentic form. The community evolved over many generations, and its inhabitants adopted the practice of coexisting with the natural environment.

The community's evolution is credited partly to the first Agrarian Reform implemented in 1959. Through this reform initiative, one hundred peasants living in Sierra del Rosario received two caballerías (approximately 27 hectares) of land in this territory, which they used to grow minor crops.

In 1968, the need to implement economic and social development projects in rural areas led to integrated development plans. The Sierra del Rosario Plan was one of those projects. Its objectives were the restoration of the environment, the advancement of the community, and the enhancement of the villagers' livelihood.

Besides the extensive road construction, another key outcome of this initiative included a significant reforestation programme, which included planting six million trees of precious timber.

Because this project was successful in 1985, UNESCO declared 25,000 hectares of Sierra del Rosario a Biosphere Reserve, the first one in Cuba.

[8] las_terrazas.pdf (unesco.org)

The delegation at the Paper Recycling Workshop and Art Studio operated by a resident of the Eco-Community of La Terrazas

The delegation visited some of the noteworthy sites within the community included:

- **The Moka Hotel,** that was purposefully designed to complement its surroundings. This is clearly demonstrated by the giant tree that spectacularly towers from the middle of the hotel's sky-view lobby;

- **Polo Montañéz' House,** the last place of residence of the famous Cuban artist who initially practised farming within the community. His family was among the first to settle down in the community;

- **A paper recycling workshop and art studio for a resident who recycles waste paper for designing artistic posters, greeting cards, journals,** and other types of arts and crafts. The delegation commended the shop owner for pursuing this type of 'green' or sustainable entrepreneurship.

## Day 6: FRIDAY- SEPTEMBER 6th, 2024

### Federation of Cuban Women- *the rights and advancement of women are fundamental to the people of Cuba.*

Obtaining more significant insights into Cuba's philosophy and policies related to women's rights and advancement was one of the critical objectives of the official visit. In this regard, the delegation commenced day 6 with a visit to the headquarters of the Federation of Cuban Women. In 1960, Fidel Castro and Vilma Espin—a chemical engineer, feminist, and leader of the revolutionary movement in the eastern provinces—founded *The Federation of Cuban Women* to advance women's rights, gender equalisation, and reproductive health rights[9]. The delegation met with Ms. Teresa Amarelle Boué, Secretary General of the Federation and other representatives.

The delegation meets with officials of the Federation of Cuban Women. Also present is Deputy Danhiz Díaz Pereira, Vice President of the Permanent Commission for Attention to Youth, Children and the Rights of Equality of Women of the National Assembly

[9] https://cubaplatform.org/federation-cuban-women

Some of the notable points raised by representatives of the Federation were as follows:

- the federation is not a state entity but was commissioned and established by decree of the government;
- Women's rights are protected in the Constitution of Cuba;
- In terms of maternity benefits, women are given 15 weeks of maternity leave and fathers are also entitled to paternity leave;
- 55% of the representatives of the National Assembly of Cuba are women.

Speaker Annisette-George referred to the ongoing work of the recently formed Woman Parliamentarians of Trinidad and Tobago and indicated that the group would be willing to collaborate with the Cuban Woman's Foundation. In this regard, Speaker Annisette-George invited the Foundation’s Director to visit Trinidad and Tobago and participate in a Parliamentary gathering to be held in December 2024, which will focus on the issue of Gender Equality.

**Meeting with Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs**

The delegation briefly met with Hon. Josefina Vidal Ferreiro, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs. The Vice-Minister extended apologies on behalf of the substantive Minister (Hon. Bruno Eduardo Rodríguez Parrilla) who could not attend the meeting due to prior engagements.

During the meeting, Madam Speaker commended the government of Cuba for its efforts to restore and upkeep their historical and heritage buildings and infrastructure. Reference was also made to the continuous support rendered to Cuba by CARICOM in denouncing the economic sanctions imposed on the country by the United States of America. The Vice-Minister described these sanctions against Cuba as the most severe and unmatched worldwide. She reiterated that there was great anticipation on the part of her government for the Cuba-CARICOM Foreign Ministers conference to be held in Guyana in October, 2024.

The delegation meets with the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs and other officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

## Visit to the Ministry of Public Health

The final day of the official visit continued with a meeting with the Hon. José Angel Portal Miranda, Minister of Health, at the Ministry of Public Health's headquarters.

The delegation meets with the Minister of Health and other Ministry of Public Health officials.

The following were the main takeaways from the discussions:

- Cuba has approximately 11,000 doctors and offers comprehensive access to public health care for its citizens;
- Significant efforts are being made to enhance the capacity of Cuba's molecular biology laboratories;

- The country has a disease surveillance system that constantly monitors the progress of diseases and guides the administration of appropriate Disease Control mechanisms;

- There are 16 vaccines in circulation throughout the population of Cuba; 11 of these vaccines were produced in Cuba. The Cuban population presents very little to no resistance towards the use of vaccines;

- Program focuses on the dispensation of treatment to persons with non-communicable diseases including cancer, hypertension, diabetes and kidney failure. Particular attention is given to diabetics who require amputations. Diabetic ulcer medication was created in Cuba to combat the level of diabetic amputations in the country;

- it was noted that Cuba rarely recorded any deaths due to dengue and other mosquito-borne diseases;

- there are 88 Cuban healthcare professionals in Trinidad;

- In 2018, Cuba and Trinidad and Tobago signed an inter-ministerial agreement on the provision of healthcare. However, the renewal of this agreement is still pending.

**Visit to the National Institute of Sport, Physical Education and Recreation**

*'To build a healthy nation every citizen must engage in sports at some level'*

The National Institute of Sport, Physical Education and Recreation (INDER) was created in 1961. It is analogous to a Ministry of Sport and governs all sports and recreation in Cuba. The institute oversees the training of high-level, competitive, world-class athletes[10].

The delegation benefited from a presentation entitled *"Characterisation of Sports Education System".*

Following the presentation, Madam Speaker commended the Institute for its work in developing world-class sportsmen and Olympic champions and reflected on our country's efforts in sporting disciplines, including Netball, Cycling, and Track and field.

The institute's director extended an Invitation to the Minister of Sport and Community Development of Trinidad and Tobago, through Madam Speaker, to attend Cuba's commercial sports fair in February 2025. The director also offered to share the entire

[10] https://www.topendsports.com/resources/centres/cuba.htm

annual calendar of sporting activities held in Cuba so Trinidad and Tobago athletes may attend and participate in these sports events.

Photo collage: Delegation during a visit to the National Institute of Sport, Physical Education and Recreation. Top Photo: Members of the delegation accompanied by Cuban Woman Wrestling Olympic Silver Medalist 2024

**Day 7: SATURDAY- SEPTEMBER 7th, 2024**

## Clusing meeting with the Honourable President of the National Assembly

Before the delegation's departure, a debriefing was held with Hon. Esteban Lazo Hernández, President of the National Assembly. The meeting allowed the delegation to reflect on and share our experiences, observations, and learnings. Speaker Annisette-George expressed her immense appreciation for the tremendous hospitality afforded to the delegation. Both parties agreed that this official visit marked a pivotal milestone in strengthening Parliamentary relations between Cuba and Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Speaker used the opportunity to reiterate the position adopted by Trinidad and Tobago at the annual General Assembly of the United Nations, which states that *"The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago does not apply unilateral economic measures as a means of political and economic coercion against other countries."* The Speaker also referenced the unjust inclusion of Cuba on the list of States that sponsor terrorism and underscored that Cuba is deemed compliant or largely compliant with 38 of 40 recommendations of the 2015 inter-governmental task force on terrorism financing, proliferation financing and money laundering.

The delegation at its final meeting with the President of the Assembly, which was held at the Hotel Nacional.

**Departures**

Officials of the National Assembly were at the diplomatic lounge of the “José Martí” International Airport to bid farewell to Madam Speaker and other delegation members.

The delegation then travelled to Panama and boarded a connecting flight to Port of Spain, Trinidad. The delegation arrived in Trinidad on Sunday September 08 2024 at 1:40 a.m. via COPA Airlines flight CM314.

## Conclusion and outcomes

The delegation was tremendously honoured to have received such a gracious and hospitable reception from our Cuban colleagues. Given the structure and execution of the programme of activities, it was evident that a significant amount of planning and preparation was expended to ensure that Madam Speaker and the delegation had a productive, engaging and memorable experience.

Based on the seven days of extensive and fruitful interactions with the various governmental officials, it was reasonable to conclude that the main objectives of the visits were fulfilled. In many instances the discussions held established a starting point for the pursuit of future action on certain areas of mutual interest.

There were many notable takeaways from the visit, however, what mostly resonated was the resolute and abounding resilience of the people of Cuba and their leadership, notwithstanding the existence of significant hardship created by severe trade and economic sanctions. This along with a palpable spirit of patriotism and determination left an enormous impression on the delegation.

Additionally, the delegation acknowledges that although the purpose of the visit was to strengthen relations between the legislative branches of both countries, several potential opportunities for Executive or Ministerial action were highlighted at the various meetings held. The matters for the consideration and potential input of the Executive are listed in **Appendix 4.**

# Appendices

*Appendix 1*

# Programme of Activities

## FINAL PROGRAMME FOR THE OFFICIAL VISIT TO CUBA BY THE HONORABLE BRIDGID ANNISETTE-GEORGE, SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, FROM SEPTEMBER 1 TO 7, 2024.

### SUNDAY- SEPTEMBER 1ST, 2024

**1:12 p.m.** Welcome of the Official delegation at the "José Martí" International Airport, Terminal 3. **Flight CM - 345 Copa Airlines**

Comment: The delegation will be received by Ms. Ana María Mari Machado, Vice President of the National Assembly of People's Power and Ms. Cindy Maharaj. Charge d' Affaires a.i. of the Embassy of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in Havana.

**Also participating from the Cuban side:**

1. Dr. Jesús Mora González, Director of International Relations of the National Assembly of People's Power.
2. Ms. Indira Pineda Rojas, International Relations Officer of the National Assembly of People's Power.
3. Interpreter

**Accommodation - Transfer to the National Hotel of Cuba**

### MONDAY- SEPTEMBER 2ND, 2024

**8:45 a.m. Departure to the (CARICOM) Heroes Park**.

**9:00 a.m. Floral Wreath Laying Ceremony at the Caribbean (CARICOM) Heroes Park**.

Comment: The delegation will be accompanied by Ms. Ana María Mari Machado, Vice President of the National Assembly of People's Power.

**Also participating on the Cuban side:**

1. Mr. Rolando Gonzales Patricio, President of the Commission of International Relations of the National Assembly of People's Power.
2. Dr. Jesús Mora González, Director of International Relations of the National Assembly of People's Power.
3. Mr. Héctor O'Reilly Gorostiza, Official of International Relations of the National Assembly of People's Power.

4. Ms. Indira Pineda Rojas, Official of International Relations of the National Assembly of People's Power.
5. Interpreter

**09:30 a.m. Transfer to the Embassy of the Republic of Trinidad in Tobago, Havana**

**9:45 a.m. Private activity at the Embassy of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Havana**

**10:45 a.m. Transfer to the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment (CITMA)**

**11:00 a.m. Meeting with Dr. C. Jose Luis Rubiera**

Comment: The delegation will be received by Ms. Odalys Goicochea, General Director of (CITMA).

**Also participating on the Cuban Side**

1. Mr. Jesús Mora González, Director of International Relations of the National Assembly of People's Power
2. Ms. Indira Pineda Rojas, Official of International Relations of the National Assembly of People's Power.
3. Interpreter.

**12:00 m. Transfer to the National Hotel**.

**Free Lunch**

**2:15 p.m. Transfer to the Chamber of Commerce of the Republic of Cuba**.

**2:30 p.m. Meeting with Mr. Antonio Carricarte, President of the Chamber of Commerce**.

**Participating on the Cuban side:**

1. Deputy Teresa González Barea, Vice President of the Economic Affairs Commission of the National Assembly of People's Power.
2. Mr. Jesús Mora González, Director of International Relations of the National Assembly of People's Power.
3. Ms. Indira Pineda Rojas, Official of International Relations of the National Assembly of People's Power.
4. Interpreter.

**3:45 p.m. Transfer to the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment (MINCEX)**

**4:00 p.m. Meeting with the Minister of Foreign Trade, Hon. Oscar Pérez Oliva Fraga**

Comment: Meeting pending of confirmation

**Participating on the Cuban side:**

1. Deputy Teresa González Barea, Vice President of the Economic Affairs Commission of the National Assembly of People's Power.
2. Mr. Jesús Mora González, Director of International Relations of the National Assembly of People's Power
3. Ms. Indira Pineda Rojas, Official of International Relations of the National Assembly of People's Power.
4. Interpreter

**Transfer to the National Hotel of Cuba**

**TUESDAY- SEPTEMBER 3RD, 2024**

**8:40 a.m. Transfer to the Revolution Square**

**9:00 a.m. Floral Wreath Laying Ceremony at the Monument of the National Hero "José Martí"**

Comment: It is proposed that the activity be chaired by Ms. Ana Mari Machado, Vice President of the ANPP. At the end of the ceremony, a tour of the José Martí Memorial will be held, followed by the signing of the Visitors' Book.

**Also participating on the Cuban Side:**
1. Jesús Mora González, director of International Relations of the ANPP.
2. Indira Pineda Rojas, Official of Relations of the National Assembly.
3. Interpreter.

**9:45 a.m. Transfer to the National Capitol**.

**10:00 a.m. Official Welcome at the National Assembly of People's Power of the Republic of Cuba.**

**Also participating on the Cuban side are:**
1. Deputy Ana María Mari Machado, Vice President of the ANPP and the Council of State.
2. Deputy Homero Acosta Álvarez, Secretary of the ANPP and the Council of State.
3. Deputy Rolando González Patricio, President of the International Relations Commission of the National Assembly of People's Power and the Council of State.
4. Deputy Estela Cristina Luna Morales, President of the Health and Sports Commission of the National Assembly of People's Power and the Council of State.
5. Deputy Martha del Carmen Mesa Valenciano, President of the Education, Culture, Science, Technology and Environment Commission of the National Assembly of People's Power and the Council of State.
6. Deputy Danhiz Díaz Pereira, Vice President of the Permanent Commission for Attention to Youth, Children and the Rights of Equality of Women of the National Assembly of People's Power and the Council of State.
7. Deputy Teresa González Barea, Vice President of the Economic Affairs Commission of the National Assembly of People's Power and the Council of State and the Council of State.
8. Deputy Aylin Justiz Águila, President of the Parliamentary Friendship Group with the Caribbean.
9. Deputy Llanisca Lugo González, Vice President of the Parliamentary Friendship Group with the Caribbean.
10. Mr. Rafael Dausá Céspedes, Director of Central America and the Caribbean, MINREX.
11. Mr. Jesús Rafael Mora González, Director of International Relations of the National Assembly of People's Power and the Council of State.
12. Ms. Indira Pineda Rojas, International Relations Officer of the National Assembly.
13. Interpreter.

**10:30 a.m. Official conversations**

**12:00 m.** Transfer to: El Laguito

**12:30 p.m. Welcome lunch offered by His Excellency Mr. Esteban Lazo Hernández, President of the National Assembly of People's Power of the Republic of Cuba, in honour of the Hon. Bridgid Annisette-George, Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago**. Location: Protocol House No. 18 in Laguito.

**Also participating on the Cuban side**:
1. Deputy Ana María Mari Machado, Vice President of the ANPP and the Council of State.
2. Deputy Homero Acosta Álvarez, Secretary of the ANPP and the Council of State.
3. Deputy Rolando González Patricio, President of the International Relations Commission of the National Assembly of People's Power.
4. Deputy Estela Cristina Luna Morales, President of the Health and Sports Commission of the National Assembly of People's Power.

5. Deputy Martha del Carmen Mesa Valenciano, President of the Education, Culture, Science, Technology and Environment Commission of the National Assembly of People's Power.
6. Deputy Danhiz Díaz Pereira, Vice President of the Permanent Commission for Attention to Youth, Children and the Rights of Equality of Women of the National Assembly of People's Power.
7. Deputy Teresa González Barea, Vice President of the Economic Affairs Commission of the National Assembly of People's Power.
8. Deputy Llanisca Lugo González, Vice President of the Parliamentary Group of Friendship with the Caribbean.
9. Rafael Dausá Céspedes, Director of Central America and the Caribbean, MINREX.
10. Interpreter. (off-table)

## 3:45 p.m. Transfer to National Library

## 4:00 p.m. Presentation of the National Folklore Group of Cuba.

**Participating on the Cuban side**:
1. Deputy Martha del Carmen Mesa Valenciano, President of the Commission of Education, Culture, Science, Technology and Environment of the National Assembly of People's Power.
1. Jesús Mora González, Director of International Relations of the National Assembly of People's Power.
2. Indira Pineda Rojas, official of International Relations of the National Assembly of People's Power.
3. Interpreter.

Return to the place of accommodation.

## WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 4TH, 2024

## 8:40 a.m. Transfer to the special school Solidarity with Panama.

## 9:00 a.m. Visit to the special school "Solidarity with Panama"

**Participating on the Cuban side:**
1. Deputy Martha del Carmen Mesa Valenciano, President of the Commission on Education, Culture, Science, Technology and Environment of the National Assembly of People's Power.
2. Jesús Mora González, Director of International Relations of the National Assembly of People's Power.
3. Indira Pineda Rojas, official of International Relations of the National Assembly of People's Power.
4. Interpreter.

**10:45 a.m**. Transfer to the Finlay Vaccine Institute.

**11:00 a.m.** Visit to the Finlay Vaccine Institute. Meeting with Dr. C. Vicente Vérez Bencomo, General Director of the Center.

**Participating on the Cuban side**:

1. Deputy Martha del Carmen Mesa Valenciano, President of the Commission of Education, Culture, Science, Technology and Environment of the National Assembly of People's Power.
2. Jesús Mora González, Director of International Relations of the National Assembly of People's Power.
3. Indira Pineda Rojas, official of International Relations of the National Assembly of People's Power.
4. Interpreter.

**12:00 p.m.** Return to the Hotel.

**Free Lunch.**

**1:45 p.m. Transfer to the Fidel Castro Center.**

**2:00 p.m. Visit to the Fidel Castro Center**

**Participating on the Cuban side**:
1. Mr. Jesús Mora González, Director of International Relations of the National Assembly of People's Power.
2. Ms. Indira Pineda Rojas, International Relations Officer of the National Assembly of People's Power.
3. Interpreter.

**3:15 p.m. Transfer to the Historical Center of the City.**

**3:30 p.m. Tour of the Historical Center of the City.**

**4:30 p.m. Visit to the Rum Museum.**

**Participating on the Cuban side:**
1. Mr. Jesús Mora González, Director of International Relations of the National Assembly of People's Power.
2. Ms. Indira Pineda Rojas, official of International Relations of the National Assembly of People's Power.
3. Interpreter.

**5:30 p.m. Return to the National Hotel**

**7:45 p.m. Departure to the Morro Cabaña Complex**.

**8:00 p.m. Participation in the Cannon Shot ceremony**

7.00 p.m. - Dinner hosted in Honour of the Official visit of the Honourable Speaker & Delegation by Embassy, Havana (TBC)

**Participating on the Cuban side**:
1. Mr. Jesús Mora González, Director of International Relations of the National Assembly of People's Power.
2. Ms. Indira Pineda Rojas, official of International Relations of the National Assembly of People's Power.
3. Interpreter.
10:00 p.m. Return to the hotel.

## THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 5TH, 2024

**8:00 a.m. Transfer to the Mariel Special Development Zone.**

**9:00 a.m. Meeting with the General Director, Ana Teresa Igarza and visit to areas of interest in the Mariel Special Development Zone**.

## **Participating on the Cuban side**:

1. Deputy Maritza G. Torres, Secretary of the Industry, Construction and Energy Commission of the National Assembly.
2. Mr. Jesús Mora González, Director of International Relations of the National Assembly.
3. Ms. Indira Pineda Rojas, International Relations officer of the National Assembly.
4. Interpreter.

## **10:00 a.m. Departure for Viñales**.

## **10:00 a.m Tour of Viñales and other places of interest.**

**Participating on the Cuban side:**
1. Deputy Julio Emilio Morejón Pérez of the National Assembly.
2. Jesús Mora González, Director of International Relations of the National Assembly.
3. Indira Pineda Rojas, official of International Relations of the National Assembly.
4. Interpreter.

## **FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 6TH, 2024**

**8:45 a.m.** Departure to the headquarters of the Federation of Cuban Women.

**9:00 a.m.** Meeting with Teresa Amarelle Boué, Secretary General of the FMC.

**Participating on the Cuban side**:
1. Deputy Danhiz Díaz Pereira, Vice President of the Permanent Commission for Attention to Youth, Children and the Rights of Equality of Women of the National Assembly.
2. Jesús Mora González, Director of International Relations of the National Assembly.
3. Indira Pineda Rojas, official of International Relations of the National Assembly.
4. Interpreter.

**10:15 a.m.** Departure to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

**10:30 a.m.** Meeting with Ms. Josefina Vidal Ferreiro, Vice Minister of MINREX.

**Participating on the Cuban side**:
1. Deputy Rolando González Patricio, President of the International Relations Commission of the National Assembly.
2. Jesús Mora González, Director of International Relations of the National Assembly.
3. Indira Pineda Rojas, International Relations Officer of the National Assembly.
4. Interpreter.

**11:30 a.m.** Return to the Hotel Nacional.

Free Lunch.

**1:45 p.m.** Departure to the headquarters of the Ministry of Public Health.

**2:00 p.m.** Meeting with Mr. José Angel Portal Miranda, Minister of Health.

**Participating on the Cuban side**:
1. Deputy Estela Cristina Luna Mortales, president of the Health and Sports Commission of the National Assembly.
2. Jesús Mora González, Director of International Relations of the National Assembly.

3. Indira Pineda Rojas, official of International Relations of the National Assembly.
4. Interpreter.
**3:00 p.m.** Departure to the Sports City.
**3:15 p.m.** Meeting with Cro. Osvaldo Vento Montiller, President of INDER.

**Participating on the Cuban side**:
1. Deputy Estela Cristina Luna Mortales, president of the Health and Sports Commission of the National Assembly.
2. Jesús Mora González, Director of International Relations of the National Assembly.
3. Indira Pineda Rojas, official of International Relations of the National Assembly.
4. Interpreter.

## SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 7TH, 2024

**1:15 p.m.** Departure to the José Martí International Airport. Terminal No. 3. Flight CM - 359, Copa Airlines.

Comment: The delegation will be seen off by Ms. Ana María Mari Machado, Vice President of the National Assembly and Ms. Cindy Shivani Maharaj, Charge d' Affaires a.i. of the Embassy of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Havana

**Also participating on the Cuban side**:
1. Mr. Jesús Mora González, Director of International Relations of the National Assembly.
2. Ms.Indira Pineda Rojas, International Relations Officer of the National Assembly.
3. Interpreter.

Farewell of the delegation
3:15 p.m. Take off of the aircraft.

# Appendix 2

## Letter of Invitation

ASAMBLEA NACIONAL
PODER POPULAR
REPÚBLICA DE CUBA

La Habana, 21 de junio de 2024

Honorable Bridgid Annisette-George
Presidenta
Cámara de Representantes de Trinidad y Tobago

Excelencia:

En nombre de las legisladoras y legisladores cubanos le expreso nuestro deseo de continuar trabajando para estrechar los vínculos entre nuestros parlamentos. Por tal motivo, sería un honor para mí recibirla en el segundo semestre del presente año.

Estoy seguro de que su visita nos posibilitará un fructífero intercambio de experiencias y ayudará al fortalecimiento de las relaciones interparlamentarias entre nuestros países.
Las coordinaciones necesarias para su visita pueden realizarse a través de nuestra representación diplomática en su país.

Aprovecho la ocasión para reiterarle el testimonio de mi más alta estima y consideración.

Fraternalmente,

Esteban Lazo Hernández

REPÚBLICA DE CUBA
PRESIDENTE
ASAMBLEA NACIONAL DEL PODER POPULAR

NON-OFFICIAL TRANSLATION

LETTER OF INVITATION

Havana, July 21, 2024

The Honorable Bridgid Annisette.

Speaker of the House of Representatives

Her Excellency:

On behalf of the Cuban legislators, I would like to express our desire to continue working to strengthen the ties between our parliaments. For this reason, it would be an honor for me to receive you in the second half of this year.

I am sure that your visit will enable a fruitful exchange of experiences and help strengthen interparliamentary relations between our countries.

The necessary arrangements for your visit can be made through our diplomatic representation in your country.

I take this opportunity to reiterate my highest esteem.

Sincerely

Esteban Lazo Hernández,

President of National Assembly of Peoples Power

Republic of Cuba.

# Appendix 3

## Letter of Intent Re: Formation of a Parliamentary Friendship Group between the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the National Assembly of the People's Power of Cuba

PARLIAMENT
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

The Honourable Bridgid Mary Annisette-George, MP
Speaker of the House

PARL/Spk: 17/1/4

August 29, 2024

**His Excellency Esteban Lazo Hernández**
President of National Assembly of People's Power
Paseo del Prado
#422 San Jose
Dragones, Havana Vieja
10100 La Habana
**Republic of Cuba**

Your Excellency,

**Re: Letter of Intent to form Parliamentary Friendship Group**

I wish to express an intent to form a Parliamentary Friendship Group between the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the National Assembly of the People's Power of the Republic of Cuba.

A parliamentary or legislative friendship group is a network that facilitates dialogue and developmental engagements on various issues outside the sphere of the executive branch of government. Notably, while the entity does not engage in matters which are reserved for the executive arm of the state, this initiative is a medium to strengthen the legislative diplomacy through the theme of sustainable development and the sub categories of education, culture, environment, preservation of built heritage and ecotourism.

I am delighted to discuss this initiative further with you and explore or outline potential collaborations.

To mark the event, I in turn will welcome the opportunity to host you in the Republic of Trinidad & Tobago at a mutually convenient period, where the agreement on the group can be formalized.

Speaker's Chambers
Office of the Parliament
Parliamentary Complex
The Red House
St. Vincent Street, Port of Spain, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Telephone: (868) 623-1434 Fax: (868) 623-1432 Email: bageorge@repparliament.org

Your Excellency, my Office will actively engage the Mission of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in Havana, Cuba, to continue and formalize the requisite progress on this initiative with National Assembly of People's Power.

With the acceptance of my highest considerations.

Respectfully,

**Bridgid Mary Annisette-George**
**Speaker of the House**

Speaker's Chambers
Office of the Parliament
Parliamentary Complex
The Red House
St. Vincent Street, Port of Spain, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

## Appendix 4

**Matters for the consideration and potential input of the Executive**

| Description | Cuban government entity involved | Possible Trinidad and Tobago State entity |
|---|---|---|
| 1. The manufacturing of artificial wood created from waste material. This synthetic wood can be used for various outdoor projects including coastal erosion projects. **(See page 7 of the Report)** | Chamber of Commerce of the Republic of Cuba | Ministry of Works and Transport<br><br>Ministry of Public Utilities |
| 2. Lessons learned from the Mariel Special Development Zone **(See page 20 of the Report)** | Ministry of Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment | • Ministry of Trade and Industry<br><br>• Evolving Tecknologies and Enterprise Development Company Limited (E-Teck) |
| 3. Renewal of inter-ministerial agreement on the provision of healthcare between the Government of Cuba and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago **(See pages 27-28 of this Report)** | Ministry of Public health | Ministry of Health |
| 4. Invitation to the Minister of Sport and Community Development of Trinidad and Tobago to attend Cuba's commercial sports fair in February 2025.<br><br>**(See page 28 of this Report)** | National Institute of Sport, Physical Education and Recreation | Ministry of Sport and Community Development |

**~END~**