



Foreign Affairs Committee

Committee Office House of Commons London SW1A 0AA
Tel 020 7219 6106 | Email FAC@parliament.uk
Website www.parliament.uk

Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London, SW1A 2AH

26 March 2019

Dear Foreign Secretary,

I am sure that you agree that as a nation we are fortunate to be able to draw on the diplomatic capabilities of members of the royal family and that their overseas visits play an important role in our international relationships, contributing a great deal to our foreign policy.

In that context, I am writing regarding the visit to Cuba of Their Royal Highnesses the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall. Given the UK government's policy towards Venezuela and Cuba's support of the Maduro regime, can you tell the Committee how the decision for a royal visit to Cuba at this time was made; and in what ways the visit will present an opportunity to advance the UK's policy in the region.

We will be placing this letter and your response in the public domain.

Best wishes,

Tom Tugendhat MP
Chair



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

Minister of State for
Europe and the Americas

11 April 2019

Tom Tugendhat MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Dear Tom,

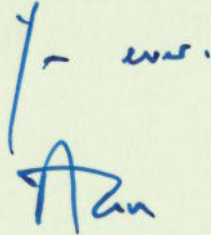
Thank you for your letter of 26 March to the Foreign Secretary with regards to the Royal Visit to Cuba. I am replying as the Minister responsible for our relations with the Americas.

All official overseas visits by Members of the Royal Family are undertaken on behalf and at the request of Her Majesty's Government and decisions on these visits are taken by the Royal Visits Committee (RVC). The RVC is chaired by the Permanent Under Secretary of the FCO and comprises both members of the Royal Household and senior officials. The decision for the Royal Visit to Cuba was taken on the recommendation of HMG over nine months ago, following careful consideration of the UK's foreign policy objectives in Cuba and the region. Each visit is designed to support foreign policy objectives, with proposals coming from Government departments, diplomatic posts overseas and Royal Households.

The Royal Visit was an excellent example of the UK using diplomacy to advance opportunities for frank and constructive dialogue with the Cubans on the way forward in Venezuela. We have always been clear that we disagree with Cuba's continued support for the illegitimate Maduro regime and believe that free and fair elections should be called in order to find a peaceful and lasting solution to the crisis. The Foreign Secretary, via telephone, and Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, in Havana, both spoke at length with the Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez on the topics of Venezuela, our bilateral relations and human rights. A statement following the Foreign Secretary's call issued on GOV.UK on 25 March. On the departure of Their Royal Highnesses, we continued talks at a senior official level on policy issues both of mutual interest and on areas which we differ, such as Venezuela.

The visit was also an opportunity to advance the positive collaboration between the UK and Cuba in areas set in motion by the signature of MOUs on education, culture, energy and financial services during the then-Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond's visit to Cuba in 2016. Our policy of active engagement, which we have pursued since 2017, has helped us to establish the constructive dialogue we now have with Cuba. This policy is consistent with the approach taken by the EU. Events like the Royal Visit and President Diaz-Canel's visit to the UK in November last year allow us to deliver important messages at the highest level. To pursue a policy of isolation towards Cuba would preclude conversations of this nature and would be counterproductive.

Cuba is at a key juncture in its evolution, characterised by a generational transfer of power, a new constitution, an emerging private sector and a nascent civil society facilitated through growing access to the internet that allows ordinary Cubans to make their voices heard. This is an evolution that we should encourage. We can only do so by making the most of the opportunities to work with the Cubans to catalyse these changes, rather than focusing solely on the matters which divide us. To that end, we hope that the momentum and goodwill generated by the Royal Visit will allow us to build on our positive engagement.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Alan Duncan', with a vertical line extending upwards from the 'A'.

RT HON SIR ALAN DUNCAN MP