**African Christian Democratic Party**

 **12 May 2022

ACDP Parliament
Budget Vote 6: International Relations and Cooperation
Speech by ACDP President, Rev Kenneth Meshoe MP**

 **ACDP leader questions DIRCO’s R50 million donation to Cuba while the need is overwhelming in KZN**

 “Honourable House Chairperson,

The Hon Minister was passionate this afternoon as she defended her department’s decision to donate R50 million to Cuba while not highlighting the urgency of assisting displaced families who were devastated by the recent floods in KZN. Has DIRCO made any meaningful contribution to assist displaced families in their own country, or don’t they care?

We know that the ANC and Cuba are ideological friends, and that Cuba supported the ANC during the struggle, but still… we have to remember that charity begins at home.

Economist, Dawie Roodt, noted that the donation to Cuba was “irrational and unaffordable,” and said there was no rational reason for South Africa to donate R50 million to Cuba because Cuba’s per capita income was double that of South Africa – can you believe it? The average Cuban’s wealth, he reportedly said, is twice that of a South African’s. “How on earth”, he said, “does a poor country give money to a richer country?” This respected economist stated further, that if the amount of R50 million was invested, it would generate R10 million in interest annually.

In a bid to halt the donation to Cuba, AfriForum took the matter to the Pretoria High Court. An urgent interdict to halt the donation was granted, and now government – in what seems to be a desperate move – have lodged leave to appeal the decision at the Supreme Court of Appeal and Constitutional Court. Does DIRCO expect taxpayers who are given bad service by municipalities to pay for these court cases, and at what cost? The ACDP does not support this irrational decision of the department that will result in wasted expenditure.

Facts confirm that the Cuban government, does not believe in freedoms that this government claims to promote and defend, neither does the Cuban government believe in democracy for its people. According to the Human Rights Watch 2022 report on Cuba, “The Cuban government continues to repress and punish virtually all forms of dissent and public criticism. At the same time, Cubans continue to endure a dire economic crisis, which impacts their social and economic rights. In July, thousands of Cubans took to the streets in landmark demonstrations protesting long-standing restrictions on rights, scarcity of food and medicines, and the government’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The government responded with brutal repression.”

House Chair, if the ANC loved their own people, more than they hate Israel, then this country would be having a stronger economy and peaceful coexistence than we have.

It is hypocritical for the Minister to condemn Israel while she failed to stand in solidarity with the International Community when they disapproved the invasion of Russia into Ukraine. Why did they refuse…

The recent devastating floods in KwaZulu-Natal have seen vast infrastructure destroyed – such as homes and bridges that collapsed. We are told it will take billions to repair the damage and yet the Department of International Relations still deem it necessary to give R50 million to Cuba while the need is overwhelming in KZN. This, in our view, is totally unacceptable. The ANC must learn to love and care for their own people, particularly their voters. They must prioritise local taxpayers and spend more resources on providing them with services before donating R50millions to Cuba, money that is desperately needed in our country. Get your priorities right ANC, and learn that charity begins at home.

I thank you.”