

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION
FOREIGN RELATIONS
SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE
SMALL BUSINESS AND
ENTREPRENEURSHIP

October 6, 2014

His Excellency Juan Carlos Varela
Palacio de las Garzas
Eloy Alfaro Avenue
Panama City, Panama

Dear President Varela:

Congratulations on your recent election. I look forward to working with your government to deepen our nations' historical relations, and advance our shared interests in a democratic, prosperous and secure Western Hemisphere. To that end, I deeply regret your government's invitation for Cuba's authoritarian regime to participate in the VII Summit of the Americas to be held in Panama.

Over the last three decades, the Western Hemisphere has gone through a remarkable transformation. Free markets, open economies and transparent governments accountable to the people through regular and free elections have become the norm; while security cooperation against transnational criminal activities is taking hold. Much of this consensus has been enshrined in the declarations of previous Summits and in the commitment of each member of the Organization of American States to govern democratically in accordance to the Inter-American Democratic Charter. By any measure, the actions of the Cuban regime stand in stark contrast to these principles and obligations.

The Cuban people have been denied the right to freely choose their government for more than 55 years, and Cuba's one-party regime enjoys the dubious distinction of having the worst human rights record in the Western Hemisphere. The regime routinely uses beatings, violent mobs, long-term imprisonment and arbitrary arrests to silence its critics, human rights defenders, and independent journalists. The Cuban regime remains the Hemisphere's only U.S.-designated State Sponsor of Terrorism, and just last year it was caught attempting to use the Panama Canal to illicitly transfer military equipment and weapons to North Korea in violation of multiple United Nations' Security Council resolutions.

The Cuban regime's record of human rights abuses and violations of international law are not matters open for debate, but undeniable and appalling facts. Therefore, Cuba's participation in the Summit of the Americas in Panama will undermine its credibility and have grave consequences for the region's consensus to promote and defend democratic rule. I urge you to avoid this outcome, and instead work with the Cuban people to support their demands for a democratic future for their country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Marco Rubio', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Marco Rubio
United States Senator