
Parliament gives the green light for consultation on the draft Constitution

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The National Assembly of People's Power approved on Sunday the holding - from August 13 to November 15 of this year - of a popular consultation on the draft Constitution of the Republic, a transcendental step before the final referendum.

At the Havana Convention Center, after the two-day debate on the constitutional draft, in which more than a hundred legislators took part, the Parliament unanimously, approved the proposed Magna Carta, as amended.

The popular consultation will be the ideal opportunity for citizens to express their views and suggest changes to the normative document, a genuinely democratic and uncommon step in the international arena where the Constitution is presented to the people only to say Yes or No in a referendum, without the opportunity to actively participate in the construction of the text.

Esteban Lazo Hernández, president of the National Assembly of People's Power, acknowledged the efficient, profound and fruitful work of the temporary committee, made up of 33 deputies, who worked since June 2 on the draft Constitution, which had been worked on by legal experts for five years.

He stressed that the discussion in the legislature - broadcasted live on Cuban

television - helped to bring the people closer to the legal concepts and particularities of the process of total reform of the Law of Laws, which will allow for deeper debates in society.

With the presence of Army General Raúl Castro, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, and the President of the Councils of State and Ministers, Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, the two-day parliamentary debate, marked by the plurality of criteria, took place on the basis of respect, scientific arguments and the search for a more inclusive country.

In exclusive statements to the Cuban News Agency, Darianna Beatriz Acuña, deputy for Matanzas, reaffirmed that the discussion of the draft bill in the Assembly was the first step for the people, the highest exponent of the Cuban State, to express their opinions on the draft Magna Carta.

The people will have the responsibility of giving continuity to the study of the text, which should be carried out with moderation and responsibility, in order to issue criteria on the socialist project, he argued.

Sonia Garcia Osmin, also a representative of Matanzas, agreed that it is essential to take into account the perspective of the citizens of the island to reach a consensus on the new Constitution.

For Anabel Tetro de la Paz, deputy for the province of Villa Clara, the most important aspect of the process is the discussion that will be held from now on in the communities, student centers and workplaces.

In these spaces, the population will have the possibility of contributing with their criteria to perfect the Constitution and thus exercise their right, he added.

On the democratic and singular character of the popular consultation process, Deputy Jorge Crespo, for Pueblo Nuevo, in Matanzas, commented on the genuine nature of this step for constitutional reform.

Cuban legislators on Sunday provided assessments of the rights, duties and guarantees included in the draft Constitution, including those related to marriage and the replacement of the concept of "freedom of speech" with "freedom of expression".

Speaking at the conference, Daicar Saladrigas, a deputy for the municipality of Camagüey, suggested modifying the term that appears in Article 53 of the current Magna Carta, endorsed in 1976.

Her proposal, accepted by all those present, raises the need to transform the wording of this paragraph so that it is written "freedom of expression", in line with its use in international standards, and in line with the recently approved communication policy in the country.

That the constitutional reform contemplates a more inclusive vision based on the human rights of marriage is a wonderful achievement, the result of learning from the Cuban revolutionary process, said Mariela Castro Espín, director of the National Center for Sexual Education (CENESEX).

After an in-depth debate on the issue during the second day of work of the National Assembly, the expert highlighted the fact that the deputies debated the issue and accepted article 68 of the preliminary draft of the Magna Carta.

This paragraph recognizes marriage as "the voluntary consensual union between two persons with legal aptitude for it", which is a sign of the sustained work of the politics of the Revolution.

There was broad support for the debate on the preliminary draft, which, according to the Cuban intellectual Miguel Barnet, marks the beginning of a new era.

The proposal for a new Constitution is dialectical and modern, which breaks traditions, because to break tradition in a revolutionary act and in Socialism there is no room for any kind of discrimination against human beings, he stressed.

According to Homero Acosta, secretary of the Council of State, who led the debate on the text in Parliament, among the regulations that must be adapted after the total reform of the Constitution are the Electoral Law, the Family, Civil and Criminal Codes, and the laws of the People's Courts and National Defense.
