Report on the ICAPP-COPPPAL Joint Mission to Cuba and Venezuela
(November 30 to December 4, 2014)

Hon. Chung Eui-yong, Co-Chairman of the Standing Committee and Secretary General of the ICAPP, and Hon. Gustavo Caravajal Moreno, Deputy Chairman of the COPPPAL, visited Cuba and Venezuela together from November 30 to December 4, 2014, after concluding the 5th ICAPP-COPPPAL Joint Session and the 1st Meeting of the ICAPP-COPPPAL Business Council (ICBC) held in Mexico City during November 28-29.

The purpose of the visits were to meet with the leaders of the principal political parties of the two countries and discuss how to further promote cooperative relations between the ICAPP and the COPPPAL and how to enhance the roles of the political parties of the two countries in doing so.

During the visits, Mr. Chung and Mr. Caravajal briefed about the common efforts of the ICAPP and the COPPPAL to strengthen their cooperation between the two continents and meet the common challenges together. They explained their joint efforts to help African political parties establish a similar organization, and thanks to such efforts, the CAPP, Council of African Political Parties, was launched in April 2013. In this regard, they informed the Cuban and Venezuelan leaders that at the 5th joint session between the ICAPP and the COPPPAL, it was agreed to convene the 1st tri-lateral meeting among the ICAPP Standing Committee, the COPPPAL Coordinating Body and the CAPP Executive Council in October 2015 in Indonesia, and work toward forming a World Congress of Political Parties in the future.

They also stressed that the launching of the ICAPP-COPPPAL Business Council was another major achievement of the ICAPP-COPPPAL joint efforts and reported the results of its first meeting which took place last weekend in Mexico City.

They also briefed the leaders of Cuba and Venezuela on the current state of the deliberations at the U.N. General Assembly (UNGA) on the ICAPP's bid for the observer status in the UNGA and requested their support in achieving consensus in the UNGA for granting the observer status to the ICAPP.

In particular, Mr. Chung said that, once granted observer status, the ICAPP would find ways to coordinate its activities in the UN with the COPPPAL, for instance by including COPPPAL representatives in its delegations to the UN meetings. By doing so, we can have the people's voices of the emerging democracies in Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, and eventually in Africa, be directly heard in the process of multilateral debates on our common challenges in the UN process.

Mr. Chung also pointed out that the ICAPP is of unique nature in that it represents more than 350 political parties in over 50 countries in Asia, both ruling and opposition parties, and across all political ideologies. The most active members of the ICAPP are ruling parties which are directly responsible for forming their governments and most of the opposition parties may also become ruling parties depending upon the election results, whereby they may also form governments of their countries anytime. Although the ICAPP is not an inter-governmental organization per se, it is not a non-governmental organization, or a civil society, either. It is something in between in nature. That is why it has decided to seek observer status in the UNGA, rather than NGO consultative status in the UN ECOSOC. The decision was, in fact, made at the advice of high-level officials in the UN Secretariat.

Visit to Cuba

Mr. Chung and Mr. Caravajal held an extensive meeting with Hon. Dr. Jose Ramon Balaguer Cabrera, Member of the Secretariat of the Central Committee and Head of the International Relations Department of the Communist Party of Cuba (*PCC*), and Member of the People's Power National Assembly, on December 1 at the Headquarters of the *PCC* Central Committee. Dr. Balaguer, at the age of 82, was one of the first generation members in the Cuban revolution together with Chairman Fidel Castro. He was former Cuban Ambassador to the Soviet Union and a member of the Cuban cabinet.

The meeting was also attended by Hon. Jorge Arias Diaz, Deputy Head of the International Relations Department of the Central Committee, and Hon. Jesus Aise Sotolongo, Official in charge of the Asia and Oceania Desk of the International Relations Department, and former Ambassador to Vietnam.

Mr. Chung and Mr. Caravajal also had four separate meetings with Mr. Arias and Mr. Aise for more in-depth exchange of views during their stay in Cuba.

The leaders of the *PCC* welcomed the visit of the joint mission of the ICAPP and the COPPPAL and confirmed their support for the principles and activities of the ICAPP and the expansion of cooperation between the two organizations.

The Cuban leaders also welcomed the launching of the ICBC and said they would discuss with relevant authorities in Cuba, including the Ministry of Foreign Trade, appropriate ways of Cuban participation in the future activities of the ICBC.

The Cuban leaders also welcomed the plan to convene the 1st trilateral meeting between the ICAPP Standing Committee, the COPPPAL Coordinating Body and the CAPP Executive Council in Indonesia in October 2015, and supported the idea of the eventual establishment of a World Congress of Political Parties encompassing Asia, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Cuban leaders pointed out, in particular, the main challenges the ICAPP has taken up to tackle with, i.e. poverty, climate change, health, education etc., are exactly same tasks of priority for the *PCC*. They said that the *PCC* would also like to widen the scope of cooperation to the issues relating to women and youth through Women's Wings and Youth Wings of the ICAPP and the COPPPAL, pointing out the active roles played by the Young Communists League and the Democratic Federation of Women in Latin America which is headquartered in Havana.

As for the ICAPP's bid for observer status in the UNGA, they expressed appreciation for more detailed information on the background and the purpose of the ICAPP’s application, and said they could now have better understanding of the ICAPP’s position. They also said that the position of the Cuban government on the issue at the 68th session of the UNGA was strictly made in consideration of procedures and practices of the UNGA in granting observer status to other international organizations.

The position the Cuban government has taken last year, the Cuban leaders emphasized, should not be seen under any circumstances as politically motivated, or as representing its negative assessment on the contributions of the ICAPP to the work of the UN or on the merits of awarding observer status to the ICAPP. They further confirmed that the *PCC* would discuss with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Cuban government how to formulate its future position in a way not to block the consensus at the next deliberations on the item at the Sixth Committee of the 70th session of the UNGA in 2015.

In this regard, Mr. Caravajal said that it would be very helpful if the position of the Cuban government would be known to other governments in the region, including Venezuela. He further emphasized that both the ICAPP and the COPPPAL are seeking the same values and objectives.

Visit to Venezuela

Mr. Chung and Mr. Caravajal held an extensive meeting with Hon. Yul Jabour, Chairman of the Permanent Commission of External Policies, Sovereignty and Integration of the National Assembly, representing the Communist Party of Venezuela (*PCV*) on December 3, 2014 at the Conference Room of the External Policies Commission of the National Assembly.

The meeting was also attended by Hon. Saul Ortega Campos, Vice Chairman of the Commission, and Hon. Christian Tyrone Zerpa, Member of the Commission, representing the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (*PSUV*). The *PSUV* and the *PCV* are the coalition partners of the current Venezuelan government. An official from Asia Desk of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was also present at the meeting.

The Venezuelan leaders also welcomed the joint mission of the ICAPP and the COPPPAL. In particular, Vice Chairman Ortega said that, although the *PSUV* has recently not been able to further consolidate its cooperative relations with the COPPPAL, its solidarity with the COPPPAL has remained unchanged. They expressed their gratitude to Mr. Caravajal for his continuous support for the cause of Bolivarian revolution in Venezuela, and President Nicolas Maduro regards himself as a good friend of Mr. Caravajal.

Chairman Jabour said that, although the *PCV* is not a member of the COPPPAL, it supports the cause and activities of the COPPPAL. To this, Mr. Caravajal emphasized that principal political parties in Venezuela should more actively participate in the COPPPAL activities, and assured them the COPPPAL's solidarity with Venezuela remains unchanged, and it would always welcome Venezuelan participation in the COPPPAL activities.

The Venezuelan leaders also expressed their support for the launching of the ICBC and expressed its hope that it would benefit all countries in the two continents. They also supported the convening the 1st trilateral meeting among the ICAPP, COPPPAL, and CAPP.

The Venezuelan leaders particularly welcomed the ICAPP mission and expressed their most sincere gratitude for the visit and briefing on the ICAPP activities, in particular, its initiative to obtain observer status in the UNGA. Thanks to the explanation and all the information Mr. Chung has provided, they could now have better understanding of the ICAPP and its purpose to obtain the UN observer status. Mr. Ortega said that Venezuela had some misunderstanding in the past on the ICAPP's intention to obtain the observer status, since many civil societies have been unfairly criticizing Venezuela at international fora, including the UN.

The Venezuelan leaders said that they would consult with the government, including the Foreign Ministry and the Mission to the UN, to consider the ICAPP's request in a more positive way and to take a decision in time for consensus at the next deliberations of the item at the UNGA. They also said that the visit by the ICAPP mission and its messages would be reported to President Maduro and other government leaders.