

# *Oxfam Urges U.S. to End Blockade on Cuba*

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Havana, August 12 (RHC-Cubasi.com)-- The director of Oxfam has broken the global aid agency's longtime silence on the U.S. blockade on Cuba, urging the U.S. Congress to lift it "sooner rather than later."

Winnie Byanyima said in an interview in Havana that Oxfam was set to formally campaign against the blockade as part of its broader strategy to increase support to Cuba.

"Cuba needs to engage in the global economy and the embargo (blockade) cuts them out," Byanyima said. "We are going to be calling for a lifting of that policy and normalizing relations sooner rather than later," she said on Wednesday.

Cuba estimates the blockade has caused the country \$121 billion in economic damages.

The Oxfam director said she was visiting Cuba to see how Oxfam could adapt its work in response to the island's difficulties. The global aid agency is working mainly in the eastern part of the country, on projects to tackle drought, increase farming output and empower women in rural areas.

As part of the ongoing process to update the country's economic model, Cuba is leasing out formerly idle land to small-holder farmers, thus helping increase output and local incomes.

The Oxfam director lauded Cuba as a "very equal society", which has performed well on social indicators such as housing, maternal mortality and access to education.

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