

# *Canadian foreign minister announces visit to Cuba*

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Havana, May 16 (RHC)-- Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland said she is visiting Cuba on Thursday to meet her counterpart, Bruno Rodriguez.

During the encounter, the two officials are expected to discuss the political crisis in Venezuela and the United States' decision to allow lawsuits for property confiscated after the 1959 revolution.

"It is of critical importance that our two countries meet to discuss the economic, political and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela and the work we can undertake together to address it," Freeland said in a statement on Wednesday.

"I also look forward to discussing how we can work together to defend Canadians conducting legitimate trade and investment in Cuba in light of the United States ending the suspension of Title III of the Helms-Burton Act," she added.

Canada vowed earlier this month to defend its businesses operating in Cuba after U.S. President Donald Trump lifted a ban on American citizens filing lawsuits against investors working on the island nation.

According to observers, the Canadian and Cuban top diplomats are also expected to discuss migration issues. Ottawa recently announced the suspension of Consular services in Havana, forcing Cubans to

apply for a Canadian visa in a third country.

Ottawa claims to be short staffed, after the withdrawal of consular officials for alleged 'sonic attacks'. This was the same pretext used by the United States Government to virtually close its consulate in Havana.

Cuban authorities and international experts consulted could not find any substantiation or evidence on the alleged 'sonic attacks' that the United States and Canada claim affected their diplomatic staff in the Cuban capital.

Chrystia Freeland's visit is the first by a high ranking Canadian government official to Cuba since Prime Minister Justin Trudeau traveled to the island in November 2016.

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