

U.S. Senators ask Biden to resume cooperation with Cuba



Washington, Jun 3 (RHC)-- Five U.S. senators have asked the Joe Biden's administration to reestablish cooperation with Cuba, especially on issues related to the environment and climate change, diplomatic sources said Thursday.

Democrats Sheldon Whitehouse, Patrick Leahy, Ron Wyden, Chris Van Hollen, and Jeffrey Merkley sent a letter to the Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken. They asked for a reversal of the policies of Donald Trump's administration regarding the island.

Cuba's ambassador in Washington, Lianys Torres, posted on Twitter the text of the document where the legislators call to resume dialogue with Havana on issues such as the conservation of marine ecosystems due to the geographical proximity of both territories.

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United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 2, 2021

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We write to ask you to reverse policies from the prior administration that have severely restricted scientific and professional exchange between the United States and Cuba. We also ask that you reestablish dialogue with the government of Cuba on marine conservation, climate change and other pressing environmental matters.

Due to the prevailing currents and Cuba's close proximity to the United States, our two countries share a rich marine ecosystem. Therefore, the health of shared marine resources depends directly on sound environmental decision-making in both countries. Coordination on ocean health, maritime navigation safety, and maritime search and rescue were central components of bilateral cooperation in the final years of the Obama-Biden administration, and a continued focus on environmental and scientific exchange in this area would benefit both nations' marine ecosystems, fisheries, and economies.

Additionally, President Biden's historic plan to tackle the climate crisis includes cooperation at a global scale and a promise to support developing countries in meeting their climate goals. Renewed environmental cooperation with Cuba in the areas of climate adaptation, clean energy, and oceans serves America's interests and benefits people in both countries.

A new policy of environmental dialogue and cooperation could expand upon the successful policies, programs, and collaborations put in place between 2015 and 2017. To that end, we ask you consider the following actions as soon as possible:

- Start a dialogue with the Cuban government to identify priority areas for cooperation and collaboration on environmental protection, marine conservation, clean energy, climate adaptation, coastal resilience, fisheries, and biodiversity conservation.
- Implement the existing bilateral agreements on environmental protection, marine conservation, biodiversity, climate, and wildlife conservation.
- Include Cuba in a regional dialogue to develop a coordinated Caribbean and Latin American strategy for addressing ocean health and climate change.

- Include Cuba in the administration's planned *Clean Energy Export and Climate Investment Initiative* in order to promote Cuba's transition to a clean energy future and to create American jobs.

We also ask that you restore the Cuban Assets Control Regulations (CACR) and the Export Administration Regulations (EAR). This would allow non-governmental organizations, universities, and other scientific and humanitarian groups to carry out projects under general license provisions. Meaningful environmental and scientific cooperation also depends upon the ability of Cuban experts to travel to the United States. Therefore, it is imperative that the U.S. Embassy in Cuba resume full operations and begin issuing multiple-entry non-immigrant visas to Cuban scientists, conservationists, academics and others.

It is time to set a new course for U.S.-Cuba relations, based on constructive engagement and environmental diplomacy. Thank you for considering these requests. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

Patrick Leahy
United States Senator

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

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For that reason, they urge the U.S. government to talk with Cuban authorities to implement as soon as possible the existing agreements between the two countries on environmental protection, clean energy, fisheries, climate adaptation, and biodiversity.

They recalled that cooperation in these areas was central components of the bilateral policy of the last years of President Barack Obama, of whom the current head of the White House was vice president.

Officials of the U.S. Executive reiterate that Cuba is not a priority issue for his government. After almost five months in power, the 243 punitive measures imposed by Trump in his eagerness to reinforce the economic blockade against the Caribbean country remain intact.

Recently, several senators presented a bipartisan initiative called the Freedom to Export to Cuba Act to get Congress to lift the unilateral sanctions imposed by Washington on the largest of the Antilles for six decades.

<https://www.radiohc.cu/en/noticias/nacionales/259595-us-senators-ask-biden-to-resume-cooperation-with-cuba>



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