

# *U.S. blockade obstructs Cuba's progress in communications and information technology*

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By María Josefina Arce

The Information and Communications Technologies sector is part of the strategic axes of the National Economic and Social Development Plan until 2030 and Cuba has been working on that path in recent years.

And although progress has been made in the computerization of society, this process has also suffered the limitations imposed by more than six decades of the US blockade, which has been reinforced in

recent years.

ETECSA, Cuba's Telecommunications Company, which has materialized changes in terms of connectivity and the digitalization of various services, is one of the entities most affected by Washington's unilateral measure, condemned by the international community.

In declarations to Agencia de Información Nacional, Wilfredo González Vidal, first deputy minister of the Cuban Ministry of Communications, pointed out that ETECSA registered losses of more than 53 million dollars from August 2021 to February last year.

This figure, said González Vidal, represents almost 52% of the total amount of damages to the telecommunications sector in that period, which amounted to more than 104 million dollars.

The reality is that if the economic, commercial and financial blockade had not existed, much more progress would have been made in the current process of informatization, which is aimed at developing and modernizing the economy.

The siege imposed by the United States hinders the supply of necessary technology and equipment produced under license or using American components.

This situation leads to having to resort to other more distant markets, with the consequent increase in the cost of the equipment required and its transportation to our country.

Furthermore, the cost of repairing equipment has also increased, since it cannot be done directly with U.S. suppliers and manufacturers.

In spite of this complex panorama, work continues to expand the population's access to the INTERNET and to knowledge. At present, there are almost eight million mobile telephone users and, through it, some seven million have access to the INTERNET.

Cuba does not renounce to continue advancing in the informatization of society to satisfy the needs of all spheres and to increase the quality of life of its citizens. That is why it is looking for alternatives to the limitations imposed by the criminal blockade, since it has highly qualified personnel, graduates of our universities.

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