

# *Cuban Foreign Minister Says Major Change in U.S. Policy Toward Havana is Crucial*

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Havana, December 18 (RHC)-- Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez issued a statement on Thursday, one year after the historic announcements by Presidents Raul Castro and Barack Obama and the return to Cuba of the remaining three of the Cuban Five.

In his statement, the foreign minister said that some advancement has been made in bilateral ties. He noted that the re-establishment of diplomatic relations and the reopening of embassies in the two countries on July 20th were preceded by the withdrawal of Cuba from the U.S. list of countries that are so-called sponsors of terrorism.

Aside from the meetings of the two presidents and the two foreign ministers, other high-level visits have taken place, while the dialogue between the two sides confirms the convenience for the two parties and for the region of expanding cooperation, the Cuban foreign minister said.

Air and aviation security, maritime and air search and rescue, the fight against the trafficking of narcotics, illegal migration, trafficking of persons and migratory fraud, are areas in which bilateral cooperation has been expanded.

New opportunities for common benefit are opening in environment protection, law enforcement, port and maritime security and health. However, Bruno Rodriguez said, in the economic and commercial field scarce tangible results appear. The measures adopted by President Obama, although positive, have been limited in scope and have not allowed further advancement. In order to revert this trend, the U.S. president should use his executive powers, expand the reach of the measures that he has already taken and adopt new ones.

Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez said that better than the announcement of a new policy, a major change in the US policy of Cuba is crucial, which does not discard the historic and legitimate claims of the Cuban people.

In order to enjoy normal relations, the United States must unconditionally eliminate the economic, commercial and financial blockade of Cuba.

We cannot speak of normalization as long as the territory illegally occupied by the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo is not returned to Cuba and other policies from the past are not eliminated, which harms Cuba's sovereignty.

The minister said that Cuba has reiterated its willingness to keep advancing towards the improvement of relations and the expansion of cooperation in issues of mutual interest.

And Cuba's foreign minister said that there are and there will be differences in many areas, but responsible coexistence on the basis of respect and equality is necessary to build a different relationship in the benefit of the two nations and their people. This will be the best contribution for current and future generations of Cubans and Americans and for the whole region.

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