Cuba Passes Legislation to Increase Birth Rate

Havana, February 10 (RHC)-- New legislation has been passed in Cuba to ensure greater maternity protection for working mothers, with the aim of encouraging a greater birth rate and addressing population aging.

Marked by population aging and an increasingly low birth rate, the demographic outlook in Cuba continues to be complex.

To cite just a few figures, the overall fertility rate for more than three decades has not surpassed the 2.1 children per woman necessary to ensure adequate population replacement; in 2015 the figure in Cuba was just 1.72. Meanwhile, 19.3% of the population is over 60 years of age and life expectancy at birth is now 78.45 years.

Among steps taken by the Cuban government to address these issues, on February 9, the Extraordinary Official Gazette No. 7 announced two decree-laws and four resolutions aimed at extending maternity protection and benefits, in order to encourage a greater birth rate, women's incorporation and reincorporation into the workplace, as well as the participation of other relatives in the care of minors.

From now on, in accordance with Decree-Law No. 339 on "Female Workers' Maternity," of December 8, 2016, if a mother returns to work - once she has completed her pre and postnatal maternity leave, and

before the child is a year old - she can simultaneously receive both the maternity benefit to which she is entitled and her normal salary.

Under the new legislation, it will also be possible for working maternal or paternal grandparents to take charge of the care of the child until the age of one and receive the corresponding social security benefit of 60% of their average monthly salary – a benefit previously only extended to fathers.

Likewise, the Decree-Law specifies that the amounts of these monthly benefit payments can not be lower than the country's established minimum wage.

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