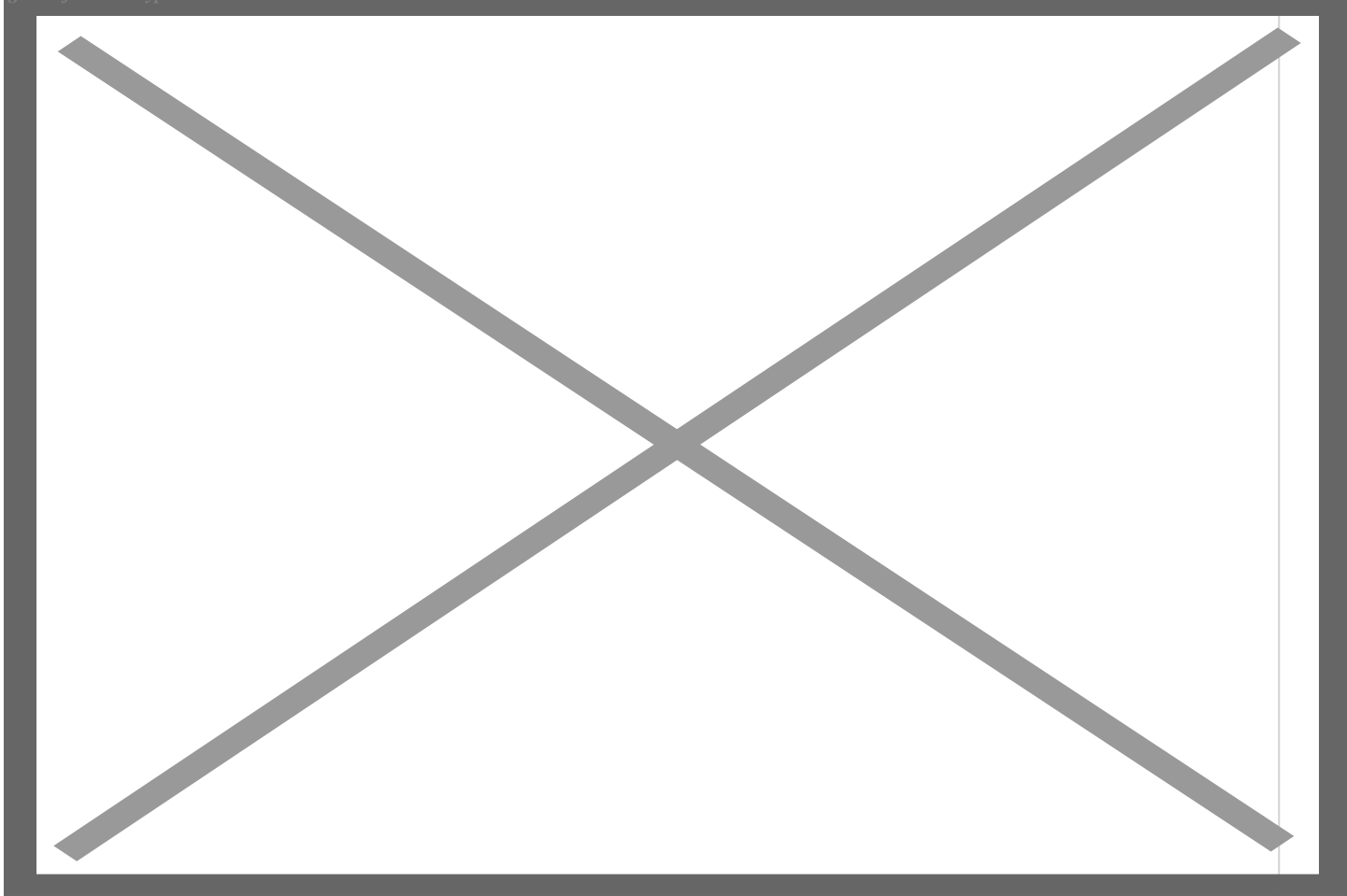


European Union defends agreement with Cuba and criticizes U.S. blockade

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The EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Josep Borrell, defended on Tuesday the bloc's Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement with Cuba

Strasbourg, France, Jun 8 (RHC)-- The European Union (E.U.) High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Josep Borrell, defended on Tuesday the bloc's Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement with Cuba and criticized the tightening of the U.S. blockade during Donald Trump's administration.

No one can doubt that human rights are a central element of our agreement. I want to take this moment to defend it, as well as its application, Borrell stressed in Strasbourg in a plenary session of the European Parliament, in which right-wing MEPs managed to introduce a point to attack Cuba with the issue of human rights.

At the forum, Borrell considered the cooperation mechanism between Havana and Brussels a 'critical commitment' to accompany the Caribbean country 'in political, economic and social reform.'

The point against the island promoted by Renew Europe and the European People's Party MEPs was denounced by other members of the European Parliament, among them Spain's Manu Pineda and Portugal's Sandra Pereira. They said the initiative was a pretext to undermine the agreement and relations between the E.U. and Cuba, using the pretext of human rights.

Regarding the economic situation in Cuba, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy pointed out that the Covid-19 pandemic has aggravated it and other important exogenous reasons such as the return by the U.S. authorities to restrictive measures'.

During his four years in the White House, Trump adopted 240 measures to reinforce the economic, commercial, and financial blockade imposed on the island for more than 60 years, many of those actions in the context of the pandemic. All maintained so far by his successor, Joe Biden.

Borrell mentioned, in particular, the impact of the tightening of the siege on the private sector, hard hit by the decrees of Trump, who suspended cruises and reduced flights in his purpose of hitting tourism.

In his speech, the senior official explained that the EU-Cuba agreement allows cooperation on other issues in addition to human rights.

For example, at this moment, we are studying the possibilities of participating, of increasing the production of vaccines against Covid-19, based on some scientific advances made in Cuba itself', said Borrell, who recalled that the EU remains the first partner of the island in trade and investments.

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