

# *PRESS RELEASE ISSUED BY THE CUBAN DELEGATION TO THE FIRST MEETING OF THE CUBA-U.S. STEERING COMMITTEE*

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The first meeting of the Cuba-U.S. Steering Committee, a mechanism agreed by both countries to establish the agenda that will be discussed during the process towards the normalization of relations between Cuba and the United States, took place on September 11, 2015.

The Cuban delegation was presided over by Josefina Vidal Ferreiro, Director General of the US Division at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and Edward Alex Lee, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs.

The meeting took place in a professional, respectful and constructive climate.

Both delegations agreed on the functions and the scope of the work of the Steering Committee as well as on the periodicity of future meetings. They also defined the Commission's work objectives and expected results.

The representatives of Cuba and the United States defined the agenda that they will start to discuss during the next few months, which includes the establishment of mechanisms of cooperation in new areas of mutual benefit, such as environmental protection and the prevention of natural disasters; health care; civil aviation and law enforcement, including the combat of drug and human trafficking and transnational crime.

Likewise, the agenda includes the development of the dialogue on issues of bilateral interest, including those on which both countries have different views, such as traffic in persons and human rights, as well as other multilateral issues like climate change and the combat of epidemics, pandemics and other threats to world's health.

The search for a solution to the pending problems in our bilateral relations, such as the compensations for human and economic damages caused to the Cuban people by the policies implemented by different U.S. administrations for more than fifty years as well as for the US properties nationalized in Cuba will also be part of the agenda. The protection of trademarks and patents was also discussed.

The Cuban delegation emphasized that the lifting of the blockade is essential, in the present bilateral context, to normalize bilateral relations. Furthermore, it reiterated that the return to Cuba of the territory illegally occupied by the Guantanamo Naval Base; the suspension of the illegal radio and television broadcasts from the United States against Cuba; and the elimination of the programs aimed at destabilizing and subverting Cuba's constitutional order will be necessary for both countries to have normal relations.

It was also agreed that the Steering Committee will meet again in November 2015, in Washington.

Havana, September 11, 2015.

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