U.S. measures against Cuba unlawful – EU

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European Union Foreign Policy Chief, Federica Mogherini, on Thursday said the U.S. law, allowing lawsuits against foreign firms active in Cuba, is contrary to international law and undermines trust in the trans-Atlantic partnership.

As part of White House efforts to increase pressure on Havana, in April the U.S. announced changes to the so-called Helms Burton Act, which would come into effect on May 2.

Specifically, Washington decided to lift its suspension of Title III, under which U.S. citizens of Cuban descent can sue foreign firms and individuals using property confiscated from them by the Cuban government after the country's 1959 revolution.

"Those who use such property will also face visa restrictions to the U.S.,'' Washington announced.

According to Mogherini, the EU deeply regrets the move.

"The EU considers the extra-territorial application of unilateral restrictive measures to be contrary to international law.

"The decision to activate Title III is a breach of the commitments undertaken in the EU-U.S. agreements of 1997 and 1998,'' the statement says.

"This will cause unnecessary friction and undermines trust and predictability in the transatlantic

partnership.

“The EU will draw on all appropriate measures to address the effects of the US measures,’’ Mogherini said.

She cited the bloc’s rights under the World Trade Organisation and the EU’s so-called Blocking Statute aimed at protecting European companies if they are sued.

Act III of the Helms Burton Act, introduced in 1996, had until now been suspended by every U.S. administration.