
U.S Assistant Secretary Urges Congress to Lift Blockade Against Cuba

21/05/2015



U.S. Assistant Secretary for the Western Hemisphere, Roberta Jacobson, called on Congress to lift the economic blockade against Cuba and said some matters are pending for resuming diplomatic links. Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Jacobson said that despite a turn in the U.S. policy towards Cuba, started on Dec. 17 with the bilateral announcement of a negotiation process, a thorough change in commercial relations would require a Congressional action to lifting the blockade.

The U.S. diplomat recalled that President Barack Obama 'has urged Congress to start that effort' to put an end to such set of sanctions.

Jacobson, who will lead tomorrow in this capital the U.S. delegation for a new round of bilateral talks to reopen embassies, said that in the past few months progress has been made, but there are still significant differences between the two governments.

"We haven't got where we want yet," said Jacobson, who insisted that the two countries are now closer than ever. She added that the list of issues is turning shorter and she hopes the process is completed this time.

According to Jacobson, the United States expects its embassy in Havana can function as any other diplomatic mission in Cuba and as other U.S. missions around the world.

Jacobson said that in the future the agenda will continue including issues like human rights and democracy, on which Washington and Havana's points of view are different.

Meanwhile, Deputy Director of U.S. Affairs of the Cuban Foreign Ministry, Gustavo Machin, highlighted the positive atmosphere for the new round of talks.

President Obama's decision of erasing Cuba from the list of countries sponsoring terrorism and the progress in the

efforts to guarantee banking services for our mission in Washington create a favorable bilateral scene, Machin told journalists on Monday.

Machin said Cuba will insist tomorrow in the respect for international instruments and principles governing diplomatic relations.

The Cuban government states that the U.S. economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on Cuba for over half a century, along with the permanence of a naval base in a Cuban territory illegally occupied by the United States (Guantanamo), constitute the main obstacle for a full normalization of bilateral relations.
