

Cuba Reacts to New Measures Announced by U.S. This Week



By Juan Jacomino

Havana, March 17 (RHC) —Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez described as positive new measures announced by the U.S. government yesterday aimed at relaxing Washington's economic circle against Cuba.

Speaking to the press in Havana, Minister Rodriguez said the new measures were in the right direction, but he noted that their "scope and practical effects" are being currently analyzed, to determine their actual feasibility.

He said Cuba's authorization to use U.S. dollars in its international transactions, included in the new package, addresses an important aspect of the U.S. blockade against Cuba, although they would require the issuing by the U.S. government of a further political statement and "clear and precise instructions that provide legal and political guarantees to banks." He said Cuba hoped that from now on, fines to foreign banks for deals with Cuba—as has repeatedly been the case over the last few months—, will not continue to happen.

"In the coming days, we will attempt to make some transfers in U.S. dollars—he said—to confirm that they come through, and that the banks have received instructions indicating that they are allowed to engage in

financial operations with Cuba.” Once it is demonstrated that it is possible for Cuba to use U.S. dollars, he asserted, the surcharge introduced by Cuba in the local use of dollars will be removed.

Yet, he noted, “...authorizing Cuba to use U.S. dollars does not mean that banking relations between Cuba and the United States have normalized.”

Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez said while in Cuba President Obama will be able to “see a nation that is involved in its economic and social development.” He confirmed that a planned public speech by President Obama in Havana will be carried live on national television, allowing Cubans to draw their own conclusions from the president’s words.

Minister Rodriguez described the upcoming visit by the U.S. president as “an important occasion to identify new steps” that the two countries could take to improve relations.

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