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Two young Cuban women participating in the Washington meeting. Autor: Twitter Publicado: 31/10/2017 | 12:19 pm

Rodríguez Parrilla: "The United States government closes and Cuba opens"

At the 4th National Meeting of Cuban Residents Living in the United States Cuba's Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla announced changes to the island's immigration policies, which will take effect on January 1st, 2018 and will help to strengthen the ties of the Cuban emigration with the nation. They also stamp upon some intrigues against Cuba

Publicado: Tuesday 31 October 2017 | 12:22:11 pm.

Publicado por: Juana Carrasco Martín

This Saturday, in Washington, for the fourth time, Cubans living in that country had a clearer and more inclusive image of Cuba, despite the complex stage in which the Trump administration has inserted Cuba-US bilateral relations.

The decision of that Government that, unilaterally and as retaliation towards Cuba and its people, cut diplomatic and consular services is an obstacle to travel in one direction or another with the obvious purpose of applying political pressure against our country, and also seek to hinder and affect the family ties and that of those living in the United States, eager and willing to remain close to the land where they were born and to which they want to continue attached from culture and feelings of national identity.

Of course, none of the arbitrary and unilateral decisions of the White House can cut or dent in the least the determination and willingness of the Cuban Government to increasingly strengthen relations with the children of this land, which have been fostered by the enriching and thoughtful meetings that we know as Nation and

Emigration and with regional and local meetings, like the one held this Saturday, which brought together in the US capital 129 Cubans residing in 17 states. Similar recent meetings brought together the associations of the Latin American and Caribbean countries in Panama and that of Milan, with residents of European countries.

In spite of being abroad, Cubans have a special attachment to their homeland, as well as the pride when saying "my family, my country, my land, my homeland, my Cuba", and in sharing those very deep feelings of belonging, such as the seasoning and smells of the kitchen, the music, the dance, the jokes, the boisterous and the never restrained joy, and many more. So it is not by chance that there are 157 associations of Cubans in 72 countries, in which they are equally united by cultural and recreational activities, that enthusiastic attendance at a sport event where victory is celebrated big time, or the concert of the longed-for artistic group. They also meet to share concerns and news of the beloved Island and, above all, to defend the dignity and right of the nation of their birth in a sovereign and independent manner.

The most committed consciously support the Cuban political project, safeguard conquests and denounce aggressions that are materialized in one, the economic, commercial and financial almost six decade-long blockade.

This is what happened in Washington this Saturday, October 28, at Howard University, where the Historian of Havana, Eusebio Leal Spengler and the American representative from Virginia, Don Beyer, took the floor. In addition, Martí and Fidel were remembered.

A sovereign announcement

In the closing speech of the fraternal meeting Cuba's Foreign Affairs Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla announced the new migration policy, after those coming into effect on January 14, 2013, which in turn had updated the Migration Law 1312 of September 1976.

Those of this October 28 also respond to ideas and suggestions from Cubans living abroad, expressed in previous regional meetings of the Nation and Emigration and by different ways. It is the continuity of a sovereign process of strengthening Cuba's relations with its children and the effectiveness of the existing communication to exchange and respond to the concerns, needs and interests of those communities.

No wonder the Head of Cuban Diplomacy pointed out that one of the conclusions of the meeting could well be: "While the United States closes, blocks; Cuba opens."

The Declaration approved and signed by the Cubans - many of them from Florida - rejected the June 16 Trump administration's announcements regarding the policy towards Cuba, and described them as a setback in bilateral relations that had been built in recent years.

In this regard, the subsequent reduction of US diplomatic personnel in Havana and Cuban diplomatic personnel in Washington were highlighted. "These decisions have a direct impact on issues of interest to Cubans living in the United States," the Declaration states.

Some necessary clarifications

There will be many questions, but some can be explained by careful reading the announcement. The Foreign Affairs Minister made clear the will to shake hands and ties and pursue an open process.

Eliminating the authorization of the passport for the emigrants' trips to Cuba favors 823,000 Cubans, who will

only need their valid and legal passport to travel to the Island.

During 2016, some 428,000 Cubans living abroad travelled to the Island and 329,000 of them came from the United States. This represented an increase with respect to the previous stage of 11.8 % of the total of emigrants and 13.37 % of those who reside in the US.

One step only for Cubans residing abroad, allows them to enter and leave boarding pleasure boats, using as ports the Marina Hemingway and Gaviota Varadero for now.

Maybe an explanation is needed on the third announcement about the possibility for those who left the country illegally to travel to Cuba. The refusal to enter the national territory had been established as indefinite since 1995.

However, the cease of the dry feet-wet feet policy brought down the number of illegal departures, making them almost disappear, which showed that this content of the Cuban Adjustment Act was an additional stimulus for illegal departures, mainly by sea, which also affected not a few Cuban families. That's why the 1995 amendment was modified, but they still had to wait eight years to obtain the permit. Now it opens doors to those who, mostly for economic reasons, ran the risk of illegal departure.

For obvious reasons of national security, those whose illegal departure was by the US Naval Base illegally occupying a part of the territory of Guantánamo are excluded.

The return of drug traffickers, people trafficking executors and other international crimes or those who have attempted against the security of the country and practiced terrorism against the Cuban people and its facilities is also prohibited.

A request of the emigrants will be received with pleasure: elimination of the requirement of resident so that their children born abroad can obtain Cuban citizenship and their identity document.

This decision especially benefits those who were born in countries that do not recognize citizenship to the foreigners' children. From the first day of 2018, those who request their citizenship will not need to stay or live a specific amount of time in Cuba, they only need to demonstrate the blood ties with their Cuban parents.

Once again Cuba shows willingness to strengthen ties with its children.

Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla said it in a phrase that was applauded on Saturday afternoon at Howard University in Washington: "We have made long efforts towards full normalization of Cuba's relations with its emigration, which feels love for the country and for their families, and we will persist in it by the common will of our nation."

The third step, with full precision and in defense of national security, emphasizes: "Allowing the entry to Cuba of Cuban citizens who left the country illegally, except those who did it through the United States Naval Base in Guantánamo." .

Translated by ESTI

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