

Statement by the Revolutionary Government

Havana, Cuba - July 1, 2015 - With the reestablishment of diplomatic ties with the United States, the lifting of the blockade, among other issues, will be essential to the ultimate normalization of relations

On July 1, 2015, the President of the Councils of State and Ministers of the Republic of Cuba, Army General Raúl Castro Ruz, and the President of the United States of America, Barack Obama, exchanged letters through which they confirmed the decision to reestablish diplomatic relations between the two countries and open permanent diplomatic missions in their respective capitals, from July 20, 2015.

That same day, the official opening ceremony of the Embassy of Cuba in Washington will be held, in the presence of a Cuban delegation led by Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla and composed of distinguished representatives of Cuban society.

By formalizing this step, Cuba and the United States ratified the intention to develop respectful and cooperative relations between both peoples and governments, based on the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and International Law, in particular the Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic and Consular Relations.

The Government of Cuba has decided to reestablish diplomatic relations with the United States in full exercise of its sovereignty, invariably committed to the ideals of independence and social justice, and in solidarity with the just causes of the world, and reaffirming each of the principles for which our people have shed their blood and ran all risks, led by the historic leader of the Revolution Fidel Castro Ruz.

With the reestablishment of diplomatic relations and the opening of embassies, the first phase concludes of what will be a long and complex process towards the normalization of bilateral ties, as part of which a set of issues will have to be resolved arising from past policies, still in force, which affect the Cuban people and nation.

There can be no normal relations between Cuba and the United States as long as the economic, commercial and financial blockade that continues to be rigorously applied, causing damages and scarcities for the Cuban people, is maintained, it is the main obstacle to the development of our economy, constitutes a violation of International Law and affects the interests of all countries, including those of the United States.

To achieve normalization it will also be indispensable that the territory illegally occupied by the Guantanamo Naval Base is returned, that radio and television transmissions to Cuba that are in violation of international norms and harmful to our sovereignty cease, that programs aimed at promoting subversion and internal destabilization are eliminated, and that the Cuban people are compensated for the human and economic damages caused by the policies of the United States.

In recalling the outstanding issues to be resolved between the two countries, the Cuban Government recognizes the decisions adopted thus far by President Obama, to exclude Cuba from the list of state sponsors of international terrorism, to urge the U.S. Congress to lift the blockade and to begin to take steps to modify the application of aspects of this policy in exercise of his executive powers.

As part of the process towards the normalization of relations, in turn, the foundations of ties that have not existed between our countries in all their history will need to be constructed, in particular, since the military intervention of the United States 117 years ago, in the independence war that Cuba fought for nearly three decades against Spanish colonialism.

These relations must be founded on absolute respect for our independence and sovereignty; the inalienable right of every State to choose its political, economic, social and cultural system, without interference in any form; and sovereign equality and reciprocity, which constitute inalienable principles of International Law.

The Government of Cuba reiterates its willingness to maintain a respectful dialogue with the Government of the United States and develop relations of civilized coexistence, based on respect for the differences between the two governments and cooperation on issues of mutual benefit.

Cuba will continue immersed in the process of updating its economic and social model, to build a prosperous and sustainable socialism, advance the development of the country and consolidate the achievements of the Revolution.

Africa Embraces the Five

The Five Cuban Heroes were received with expressions of love and admiration during their first tour of Namibia, after a 10-day visit to South Africa; and before heading to Angola.

By Nuria Barbosa León

The Five Cuban Heroes were received with expressions of love and admiration during their first tour of Namibia, after a 10-day visit to South Africa, stopping in five of the country's provinces: Gauteng, Free State, Limpopo, KwaZulu Natal and Western Cape; and before heading to Angola.

Founding President of the Republic of Namibia, Sam Nujoma, embraced the Five at his home in Etunda, where they spoke for half an hour. Nujoma began by inquiring as to the health of the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro. Also present during the conversation was current President Hage Geingob, who described the Cuban anti-terrorists as an example of resistance.

In the capital of Windhoek, Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González and René González paid tribute to the fallen of Namibia's independence struggles at the Heroes' Acre memorial, greeted people from the community of Katutura, visited the Independence Memorial Museum and participated in a solidarity rally.

Peya Mushelenga, interim Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, who accompanied the Five for the majority of their visit, made a statement in which he expressed the

significance of their visit to his country.

Fernando González, vice president of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples, also commented on the expressions of love they had received from the Namibian people and the Cuban collaborators working in the country.

He described their stay as beautiful and fruitful, with many expressions of solidarity.

On their arrival, Deputy Minister of Environment, Tommy Nambahu, told the Five how much they are admired by the people who know of their work in defense of peace and against terrorism.

In Angola, the Five and their relations lay a floral wreath at the monument to Agostinho Neto, first President of the African nation, and spoke with Roberto de Almeida, vice president of the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA).

Later, they visited the Alto das Cruces Cemetery where they laid flowers at the site where the remains of internationalist fighter Raúl Díaz Argüelles lie. Díaz Argüelles, a Cuban martyr, died on December 11, 1975, in the southern province of Cuanza Sur, from wounds sustained after a land mine explosion which destroyed his tank.

In South Africa, the Five participated in an international solidarity symposium organized by the Tripartite Alliance, which was devised during International Colloquium held in Havana in September 2014 to demand the release of Gerardo, Ramón and Antonio, then still incarcerated in U.S. prisons.

The final declaration – read out by Chris Matlhako, secretary general of the Society of Friendship with Cuba in South Africa (FOCUS) - was unanimously approved. He stated that the solidarity movement will continue to work given that, although the Five are now free, challenges still remain; such as ending the genocidal U.S. blockade imposed on the island and the return of the illegally occupied Guantánamo Naval Base territory.

Fathe Michael Lapsley and Justice Zac Jacob were among the key speakers of the event, also attended by the Secretary General of the African National Congress (ANC), Gwede Mantashe, in addition to the Premier of the province of Gauteng, David Makhura.

During the encounter, each of the Cuban patriots recounted anecdotes of their case and lives in general. Ramón's wife, Elizabeth Palmeiro, spoke about the impact of 16 years of separation on the families, as well as efforts made to secure the return of their loved ones.

The Five's African tour began on June 21, in Cape Town, legislative capital of South Africa and the province of Western Cape, and concluded in Angola on July 8, where Gerardo Hernández, René González and Fernando González, served as internationalist fighters.