



LATIN AMERICA WORKING GROUP

ACTION AT HOME FOR JUST POLICIES ABROAD

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Diplomatic Relations Restored between U.S. and Cuba for the First Time in Five Decades

Washington, D.C.— At midnight today, the Cuban Interests Section in Washington, D.C. was officially converted to an embassy. At 4am EST, the Cuban flag was placed in the lobby of the U.S. State Department, alongside flags of other nations with which the United States maintains diplomatic relations. At 10:30am EST, the Cuban flag was also raised in front of the newly reopening Cuban embassy in Washington during a ceremony honoring the reestablishment of diplomatic ties between the two nations. Among the notable attendees at the flag-raising ceremony were the heads of ongoing diplomatic negotiations: U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Roberta Jacobson and Director of Cuba's U.S. Division in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Josefina Vidal. Secretary of State John Kerry will meet with Cuban chancellor Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla this afternoon at the State Department to address reporters in a joint news conference.

The U.S. Interests Section in Havana was also reopened as an embassy today. An official celebration and flag-raising ceremony will take place on August 14, 2015 in the presence of Secretary of State John Kerry. Secretary of State Kerry's historic trip to Havana will mark the first visit of a U.S. Secretary of State to Cuba since 1945.

"The Latin America Working Group celebrates this major milestone in U.S.-Cuba relations and lauds the long-awaited reopening of embassies in Havana and Washington. The decision to reestablish diplomatic relations reflects widespread support from the majority of Americans, Cuban Americans, and Cubans alike. Our two countries can now formally work towards building a diplomatic relationship based on equality and respect; a relationship that diplomats, policymakers, activists, and advocates have been working toward for years," says **Angelika Albaladejo**, the Latin America Working Group's Program Assistant on Cuba.

U.S. and Cuban diplomats will now be formally registered and for the first time since formal embassies were closed, they will be allowed to travel freely in the countries and will be able to receive invitations to functions as members of other diplomatic offices can.

The opening of embassies marks a major step forward in normalizing diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Cuba after half a century of a failed U.S. foreign policy on Cuba. The U.S. and Cuba had been negotiating the reestablishment of embassies since the December 17, 2014 announcement that the two countries would move to restore ties and the official announcement of the reopening of embassies was made by President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raúl Castro on July 1, 2015.

Cuba was officially removed from the State Sponsors of Terrorism list on May 29. President Obama's actions on Cuba have made huge strides forward in normalizing U.S. relations with Cuba, but much remains to be done. Only Congress can definitively end the embargo and the travel ban on Cuba.

For more information on LAWG's advocacy, analysis and coalition work on Cuba, see the following:

- ["Press Release: U.S. and Cuba to Open Embassies in Havana and Washington."](#) July 1, 2015
- ["Changes in U.S.-Cuba Relations—Finally."](#) May 11, 2015, Mavis Anderson
- ["U.S.-Cuba Hemingway Commemorative Project by the Latin America Working Group Education Fund"](#)

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