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**Statements Josefina Vidal Ferreiro, the Foreign Affairs Ministry**

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What are the paths of relations between Cuba and the United States in 2016? How much progress has been made? What issues are capitalizing on the agenda between the two countries? About all this talk with Josefina Vidal Ferreiro, director general US Foreign Ministry.

Since it was studying the Soviet Union in 1979, Josefina Vidal Ferreiro life has been closely linked to the culture, language and political and academic events in the United States.

He speaks without exaltation, but say the hardest things. Understandably explains the most complex issues. Your communication skills should have served a lot in the work of commanding the talks with representatives of the US administration over the last year, first to restore diplomatic relations and then on the way towards normalizing ties with our country.

In search of answers came the Cuban News Agency (ACN) to his office in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

-A Little over a year from December 17, 2014, is it still optimistic?

I still work with a high dose of momentum and optimism, but begin to impinge on me certain amount of realism because it is an election in the United States; we do not know what will happen.

"It is a year to work with this administration and the side of Cuba there is a will to move forward and we see opportunities to do so. But it is a year that is shortened by the election campaign; politically reaches the summer. "

"There are variables beyond our control, but we will continue with the conviction that Cuba and the United States have no other destination that respectful coexistence, then, life has shown, the confrontation does not benefit anyone."

Could it be the process reversible?

I read with interest to academics and intellectuals, including members of Congress, who are adamant that the process is irreversible. It would not be so absolute. There are aspects that are.

"I cannot imagine a new president, whoever he is, saying that break relations with Cuba and closing its embassy. There are other issues on which they could retreat, as cooperation in various areas, repeal some of the instruments adopted by executive or by way of inaction emptied his purpose. "

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A moment ago he spoke of respectful coexistence, how to achieve it and what are the main challenges for Cuba?

-The Army General Raul Castro coined the phrase civilized coexistence on the basis of respect for differences. That was a pending task. Cuba has never had with the United States a civil relationship and how we want: friendly and equals.

"That's why I always say, we are building a new kind of relationship, a path not traveled before, which offers opportunities to work together on issues that affect us equally, but in turn has challenges because we come from a stage a confrontation really hard ".

'In this conflictual relationship it has been cooperation. I remember the earthquake in Haiti in 2010 and the fight against Ebola in West Africa in 2014.

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- And before too. What happens is that was not accompanied by the political will to cooperate across the breadth of the term. For example, we have relations with the US Coast Guard since the 90s. At that time it was focused on the issue of illegal immigration.

"Eventually we realized we had to go a little further, because we are very close and maritime accidents can occur, and include search and rescue. They realized that it was important to cooperate on the issue of combating drug trafficking, at least in terms of interdiction, Coast Guard jurisdiction. But there was a policy instrument legal obligation for the parties, pending ".

"Once restored diplomatic relations we are going to concluding formal tools to design frameworks for cooperation. In the area of environment and adopt a general joint statement; now we have to tender adapting. The same look as far as the fight against drugs, as we exchanged several drafts to reach a settlement. "

"Earlier this year we intend to have a high level meetings between the Ministry of Public Health of Cuba and the Department of Health and Human Services of the United States, to concrete actions of cooperation based on the interests identified."

'But that last contradicts Parole Program for Cuban medical professionals.

And they know it. We reiterate it permanently. Not only in contradiction with that specific aspect of cooperation, but also with the entire bilateral climate that the US government is interested in promoting with Cuba.

That program, as the foot dry foot policy mojados- President Obama could change, because they are not laws.

"We are building a new kind of relationship, on a road not traveled before"

It's a policy, program. They could get a communication saying that ended. Amid the current context Parole Program does not hold, as the policy of wet foot-dry foot, that not only continues to encourage illegal emigration but encouraging irregular migration, because most people are reaching their borders have legally left the island.

"And beyond policy wet feet, dry feet, is the Cuban Adjustment Act. While it is up to Congress to repeal it, which is that legislation provides that the Attorney General has discretion to adjust status to Cuban citizens who may find themselves in an irregular situation. "

"It says it's mandatory, says the law enforcement agency, in this case the Department of Justice, decides discretion if it fits or not the status or if a person returns to their country of origin. Therefore, the government has the ability to implement it as the text says ".

"It would solve a big problem if it is repealed. Homogeneizarían its own immigration policy, they would eliminate an incentive for illegal immigration and deal a blow to human trafficking. There smugglers who have been benefiting, and sometimes subjecting our fellow citizens to extort atrocities because, mistreat, abuse of women sometimes. It is a very unfortunate situation. "

-The Theme of themes: the blockade, which crosses the entire relationship. Obama introduced measures in January and September. How much more can be done to leave it as an empty shell?

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- Lot. True, it is an election year, but the steps that Obama has taken since December 17, 2014 have had little political cost to him. Except as US Senator Jeff Flake, small pockets of resistance in most sectors of American society have had an overwhelmingly favorable reception says.

"There are even conservative Republicans who in their hearts are in favor of opening up to Cuba because economic interests are watching, but do not express it because it is a policy of Obama and are opposed to anything that he does."

"The president has room to maneuver and should take other steps, because the scope of the measures taken so

far is limited. They are positive, but remain far below. They have not even solved obstacles that would pave the implementation of those in force".

"Under the new measures Cuba may purchase, acquire certain types of supplies, equipment, materials in the United States. How else still in accordance with the regulations access to private credit is prohibited? How are we going to buy, cash advance? No trades as well. "

"Another issue is the use of the dollar. It is assumed that if there was a direct banking transaction between the two countries the dollar for the authorized operations will be used. "

"Any measure to dismantle the blockade will benefit, so it is our constant battle horse, because it is an obstacle in our development plans."

What could happen in 2016? In the case of the Bilateral Commission, what other actions or agreements is sensible to wait?

- We monitor issues such as the agreement for direct regular flights, adopted ad referendum and now we have to compare texts, translations and when signing the agreement is concluded. After US airlines must establish contracts with Cubana Airlines, the Civil Aviation Institute.

"It's a complex task because it takes much technicality and the United States must meet several steps, bidding, because there are many airlines and all have equal rights in terms of market shares. There is no exact date for the start of these flights but airline spokesmen have said that we could be talking about mid-2016. "

"Another result will be the start of flights to transport the mail. And the pilot agreed to restore the service but we're still working out the logistical details ".

"It is our aim this year also agreed to formalize cooperation in fighting drug trafficking.

We must continue the dialogue initiated enforcement in Washington and which should particularized in specific areas and decide what we will do in terms of terrorism, combating trafficking, immigration fraud and mutual assistance. "

"We will continue talks on compensation, a complex issue that will take time for everything unresolved, because there is no recipe. When the experiences of other countries are regarded, they have been solved in different ways, with the particularities of each case. "

Josefina is a simple, but elegant and flirtatious Cuban, who saw the camera immediately put "stop" to the interview and took from his wallet a comb, "Vanite" and lip crayon; behind his desk in small frames it appears with Fidel, Raul, the Five, and Barack Obama himself.

I asked the smiling expression of US president while greeting; He smiled and said he joked about the age, because they were born the same year, and he spoke about the abundant gray hair that have left him since he entered the White House in January 2009.

Vidal admits that time does not spare him, this year will celebrate a decade at the helm of the US Department of the Foreign Ministry, "two terms," he jokes.

Although the objective was to talk about relationships, he shared some anecdotes and even confessed is a challenge every time you face the press:

When it comes a tale of American humor with which the Cubans have taken this new stage, as the television program in which Panfilo spoke of neighboring Josefina; or yelling at another character in the theater: "Roberta, Josephine put acábense agree."

"One day I went to the pharmacy in my neighborhood and a young man got off his bicycle and went to the local; I with my hair up, sandals, in short, the clothes to be home. He looked at me and said: 'You are the secretary'. And I died of laughter: 'No, the secretary is the other'. He knew that I knew but I was confused, I thought I was Roberta Jacobson, until I grabbed his arm and said, 'Yes, I am,' and came back to greet the bride and the drug that was filling me Greeting Corn rose up and said to me, girl, are you who you are "?

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