For Immediate Release

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U.S. Eases Sanctions on Export of Tech to Cuba

Washington - Today, the Department of Treasury and Department of Commerce officially released the anticipated changes to the **Cuban Assets Control Regulations (CACR)** and **Export Administration Regulations (EAR)**, reforms announced last year by President Obama in an effort to engage and empower the Cuban people. Central to these new rules are a set of License Exceptions and General Licenses that authorize access to telecommunications connectivity and personal communications technologies that are critical to free expression in the digital age.

Access has long supported efforts to improve the free flow of information within sanctioned countries, and applauds the measures taken by the Departments of Treasury and Commerce.

"Today's announcement means the Cuban people will no longer be denied by the United States government the basic tools of participation and communication in the digital age," said Access Policy Director Jochai Ben-Avie. **"It's now time for American companies to make their products and services available to Cuban users to the fullest extent possible."**

Until the issuance of today's authorizations, U.S. sanctions had prohibited the commercial export to Cuba of mobile phones, laptops, modems, software updates, mobile app stores, web hosting, and other personal communications technologies. These restrictions created hurdles to accessing everyday online services that are taken for granted elsewhere, and supported the strict regime of information controls imposed by the Cuban government.

The improved Consumer Communications Devices (CCD) and the new Support for the Cuban People (SCP) License Exceptions from the Department of Commerce allow companies to provide people in Cuba everything from antivirus software to satellite internet connectivity. Significantly, these policies and Treasury's new General License for Telecommunications Facilities expand measures to authorize American companies to provide services and telecommunications and internet

infrastructure inside Cuba, and to provide more effective links between the country to the rest of the world.

While the Department of Treasury had continued to expand authorizations for the sale to Iran of such services, software, and hardware, its Cuba policy fell into neglect until today.

Treasury's previous efforts to make personal communications available in Iran have proved a success, and the department's move to promote access to secure technologies more broadly is a welcome step. We expect today's action's to provide new opportunities to challenge the digital isolation imposed by the Cuban government and bolster free expression in the country.

Now that the Obama Administration has taken the steps to legalize the availability of personal communications technologies, it is now incumbent upon private companies to make their products available to individuals within Cuba. As telecommunications providers and internet services engage with this new market, we anticipate collaborations with civil society to ensure that these engagements occur in a responsible manner that supports the democratic values expressed in the policy change.

"While the Castro regime's policy of repression remains a serious obstacle to the free exercise of human rights and the use of online tools in Cuba, today's move challenges Cuba's leaders to provide the basic services that the rest of the world enjoys," said Ben-Avie.

Access encourages the Obama Administration to continue to take steps to protect the availability of information technologies to people within all sanctioned countries — including Sudan, Syria, and North Korea — and to further coordinate efforts with private industry to promote secure access where its needed most.