

CUBA-CHINA RELATIONS

A cooperation model based on equality, respect, and mutual benefit

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• BEIJING.- Cuba and China have enjoyed a special relationship since diplomatic relations between the two countries were established on September 28, 1960.

Months before these ties were officially recognized, Comandante Ernesto Che Guevara led a delegation representing the nascent Cuban Revolution to Beijing, with the aim of cementing relations with the People's Republic of China, founded 11 years prior.

Today, 57 years later, Cuba and China are celebrating having built a relationship which is not only an example for the world, but also a reference for the development of fraternal ties between two parties, governments, and peoples, which have stood the test of time.

Regarding the current state of Cuba-China relations and their future prospects, Miguel Ángel Ramírez, Cuban ambassador in Beijing, agreed to speak with *Granma International*.

This year is the 57th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Cuba and People's Republic of China. More than half a century later how would you describe the current state of these ties, and the over 50-year relationship between the two countries?

The precursor to the emergence of these ties between Cuba and China is one of the most important moments of our history when, during the First Declaration of Havana on September 2, 1960, over one million Cubans, representing our people and led by leader of the Cuban Revolution Comandante en Jefe Fidel Castro Ruz, decided to recognize the People's Republic of China.

Thus, Cuba became the first country in the western hemisphere to recognize the new China, even while the illegitimate government of Taiwan continued to hold its place in the United Nations. Since then, we have maintained ties of friendship, fraternity, and mutual support, which have strengthened over time.

The close ties of friendship between the two governments, parties, and peoples have a solid historical base, dating back to our independence struggles, in which Chinese immigrants played an important part; while the 170th anniversary of their arrival to the country is being celebrated this year. This important date, which laid the foundations for the creation of a Chinese-Cuban community, and the full integration of Chinese immigrants into our society to become part of our national identity, has been commemorated in both countries.

Our relations represent a model of cooperation based on equality, respect, and mutual benefit between two socialist, independent, economically strong nations.

Cuba has always shown its unequivocal support for the One China policy, and strongly rejects any actions which threaten its sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Chinese government and people have also continued to support the Cuban Revolution, and in particular its struggle against the U.S. blockade, a policy which despite continual, broad international rejection, remains intact and



There exists great potential to develop economic and political ties between Cuba and China.

continues to escalate as seen by the continual persecution of Cuba's financial transactions abroad.

Over recent years, more than 3,000 Chinese students have come to study in Cuba through government scholarship programs, which give new generations from the country's least developed provinces the opportunity to study Spanish, medicine, tourism, and education, among other degrees, on the island. Meanwhile, the number of self-financing students from that country wanting to earn a degree here has also risen, proof of the popularity and quality of Cuba's educational system among Chinese youth.

How can economic exchanges be expanded between the two countries?

China became Cuba's top trading partner for the first time in 2016, with exchanges between the two nations amounting to 2,585, 516,000 USD.

Chinese companies are present in almost all sectors of the island's economy, via projects linked to foreign trade, through which our country obtains various types of equipment, consumer goods, or through direct Chinese investment in the country.

We have seen important achievements in promoting Chinese Direct Foreign Investment in Cuba with projects such as the Bello Monte initiative linked to golf course real estate, in which Beijing has invested 500 million USD.

We are also working on various Chinese investment projects in the Mariel Special Development Zone as well as others in practically all spheres of our country's social and economic life, meaning a substantial boost for commercial exchange.

Cuba is also in the process of transforming its energy matrix, for which substantial long-term investments are needed,

and that goes for both wind, solar, and bio energy, areas in which the world's second largest economic power should play a key role.

In fact, construction has already begun on what will be the country's largest bio-electric plant, a joint venture featuring technology and financing from China, as well as Cuba and the UK.

The success and level of development achieved by various Cuban-Chinese ventures, is proof of what we can achieve with tenacity, motivation, and revolutionary spirit. As such, I would like to highlight the Shanghai-Suncuba company, owner of the Grand Kempinski-Shanghai and the three largest joint ventures in the biotechnology sector, based in different locations across the island: an expression of the strength and recognition achieved by this sector, founded by our Comandante en Jefe, and an example of the strategic direction being taken by the country.

Based on their individual realities, China and Cuba - two countries in the process of building socialism - share a similar outlook on many issues. What experiences can the two nations share in this process?

Cuba and China have both expressed their commitment to continue constructing socialism in accordance with each nation's particular characteristics and under the leadership of their respective Communist Parties. We consider ourselves to be mutual references in the construction of socialism deriving from our own unique characteristics, on the basis of which we conduct a broad and systematic exchange of experiences.

The country is immersed in updating its socio-economic model, a process which, under the leadership of the Communist Party, establishes the bases for medium and long-term national development, to

achieve sustainable, prosperous socialism in accordance with our reality. China's experience in its "reforming and opening up" process has been an important reference in this phase, defined by a continual analysis of the achievements, mistakes, and particularities of each country.

As the world's second largest economic power China is actively working to contribute to global economic stability, combat climate change and build a new type of international relations. How would you describe China's efforts in this regard?

China is without a doubt a stabilizing factor in many aspects of the global scenario. As an emerging power, it has been leading efforts to promote peaceful global development. Its rise as a key player in an increasingly globalized world, has also seen it become a leader in defending the rights of Third World countries, with the G-77+China representing the most compelling example of cooperation between equals.

It has made a transcendental contribution in terms of poverty reduction, food production, the transfer of technology, and successful launching of satellites into space, among others areas.

More recently, the country's 21st century One Belt One Road initiative and the launch of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) represent a vote of confidence in the creation of a new international system.

The expansion and strengthening of its ties with Latin America and the Caribbean represent another example of balance and stability for the region. These ties have the potential to produce great benefits for all involved, especially looking toward the upcoming Second China-Celac Ministerial Forum, set to be held early next year in our region. •

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