

# *Sergei Lavrov Stresses Russia's Economic Interests in Cuba*

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Havana, April 30 (RHC)-- Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, who paid an official visit to Cuba, expressed the interest of several of his country's companies in possible economic investments on the island.

Various companies are showing interest towards operations in Cuba and energy sector leaders like Zarubezhneft, Rosneft and Inter RAO are among them, Lavrov said.

As a main focus point, he highlighted the Special Development Zone of Mariel, west of the capital. He said that the new opening of Cuba to foreign investment makes it possible to expand Cuban-Russian cooperation programs planned until 2020, which are thus far centered on the pharmaceutical and energy spheres.

Upon the completion of talks with his Cuban counterpart, Bruno Rodriguez, on Tuesday, the Russian Foreign Minister also said that one-tenth of Cuba's debt to Russia will be reinvested in the Cuban economy.

"The part of the debt that isn't written off - and that's 10% of the total - will be reinvested in Cuban economy on agreement between the two sides," he said. "We're interested in the making these investments productive to the maximum."

He recalled an important arrangement that has already been fulfilled in the form of an agreement on writing off Cuba's debt to our country.

"This agreement is in the final phase of ratification at present," Lavrov stated.

Talks on the restructuring of a partial write-off of the debt that Cuba accumulated back in the Soviet era continued for a long enough time. Reports said that at the end of 2013 Moscow and Havana agreed to write off 90% of the accumulated debt running into over \$30 billion.

Furthermore, Lavrov pointed out that relations between the two countries are not only strategic, but fraternal and rock-solid.

The Russian diplomat reiterated his country's rejection of the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States on Cuba, and stressed that in spite of these difficulties the Cuban people has not lost its warm and fraternal essence in any circumstance.

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