

# *Political will to expand bilateral relations between Cuba and Honduras*

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By María Josefina Arce

The arrival to the presidency of Xiomara Castro, in January this year, opened new perspectives to strengthen relations between Honduras and Cuba, which are essentially historical and supportive.

The two countries are already working to strengthen economic and commercial ties and cooperation in different areas. Last July, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed in Tegucigalpa to promote exchange and collaboration for the benefit of both peoples.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Honduras, Eduardo Enrique Reina, affirmed that this memorandum gives the possibility of going down new paths of support in science and technology, literacy programs and

scholarships, among others.

On that occasion, President Xiomara Castro received the Minister of Foreign Trade and Investment of Cuba, Rodrigo Malmierca, a meeting in which the mutual interest in promoting economic ties was evidenced and which ended the working visit made to Honduran territory by the Cuban head of state.

Contacts between officials of the two governments do not stop and are moving at a good pace. This week, the First Meeting of Consultations between the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State in the Offices of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Honduras was held in the Honduran capital.

Joint projects in sectors of mutual interest such as health, education, transportation and sports were at the center of the talks. Precisely, 123 educators from the Greater of the Antilles also arrived in the Central American country in the last few days.

The Cuban educators will have the task of implementing, together with their Honduran colleagues, the literacy method "Yo sí puedo" (Yes, I can), internationally recognized for its efficiency and economy.

Official data indicate that 12% of the population over 15 years of age is illiterate, so the current Honduran government has proposed to reduce this rate to five percent in the next four years.

In terms of trade, the aim is to boost the exchange of goods and services. To this end, businessmen from the Central American nation participated in the thirty-eighth edition of the Havana International Fair, which took place last November. As part of the event, the Cuban Prime Minister, Manuel Marrero, talked with the head of Strategic Planning of Honduras, Ricardo Salgado.

Cuba and Honduras have ratified their will and interest in consolidating and expanding ties between the two peoples, united by history, friendship and an ever-present solidarity, recognized by the Congress of the Central American nation, which awarded the Cuban government and people the "Grand Cross with Gold Plaque and Special Scroll" for their humanitarian work in the last two decades.

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