

# *For continuing to strengthen bilateral relations*

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By María Josefina Arce

The intense agenda that Cuban President Miguel Diaz Canel will develop this week on his tour of Europe, which began in Italy -- to which we are united by 120 years of fluid relations -- is characterized by important moments such as visits at the highest level and great solidarity in complex situations.

The authorities of the two nations have described the bilateral ties as historic and stable, which have been consolidating and expanding in various areas such as health.

The country of the so-called old continent is among the top 10 trading partners of the Greater Antilles and is a major emitter of tourists to Cuba, although the aspiration is to grow even more in those aspects.

On that path, in June last year Havana hosted the Thirteenth Congress of the Confederation of Italians in the World, an opportunity to learn about the updating of the Business Portfolio of the Greater of the Antilles.

The European nation is present in our territory in priority sectors such as energy, construction, industry, tourism and precisely in terms of foreign direct investment.

According to official data, there are 17 businesses in operation, 6 branches of Travel Agencies, three businesses in the Mariel Special Development Zone, west of the Cuban capital, and 45 Italian branches.

Italy also had an outstanding participation in the Havana 2022 International Fair, held last November, which shows the interest of Italian businessmen in the potential of the archipelago.

Hence, last May the Ninth Session of the Cuba-Italy Business Committee was held in the city of Venice to facilitate exchanges between entities of the two nations and define concrete projects.

Cuban authorities have stressed that the Italian business community remains loyal, interested and actively participating, despite the difficulties faced by the Caribbean country due to the complex international situation and the tightening of the U.S. blockade.

Solidarity is an essential element that defines the relationship between both peoples. During the difficult times that Italy experienced due to COVID 19, Cuban health professionals made their valuable contribution in hospitals in the cities of Crema and Turin, where they tirelessly faced the pandemic.

Their extraordinary work, together with their Italian colleagues, was highlighted by the authorities, who together with the citizens expressed their gratitude and affection for the Cubans.

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