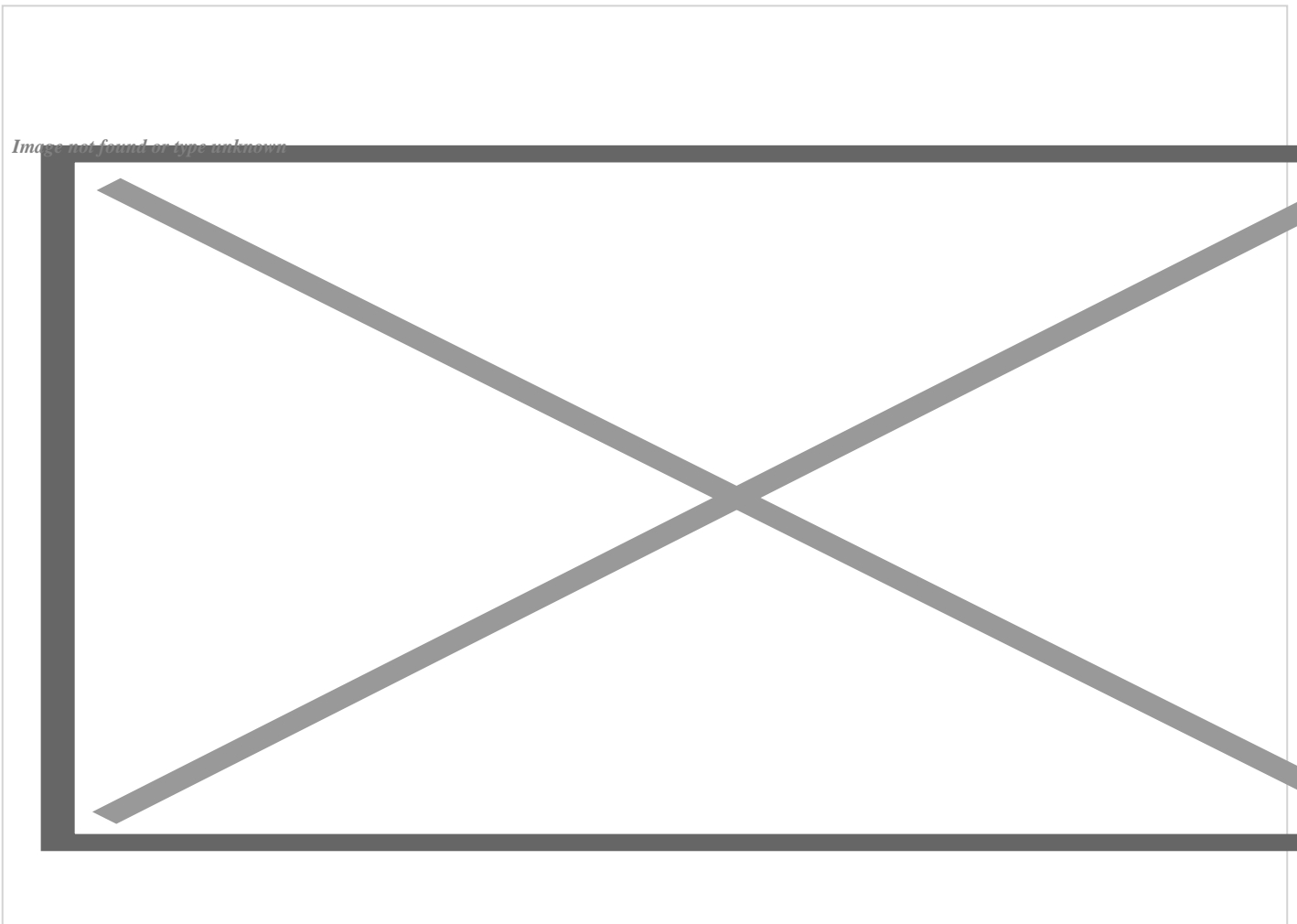


Brazilian businessmen arrive in Cuba to boost trade and restore bilateral ties



Brasilia, September 4 (RHC) -- A delegation of some 30 Brazilian businessmen travel to Havana on Monday to boost trade with Cuba and rebuild bilateral relations, as the latest step taken by the government of President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

The media, citing official sources, assure that the four-day mission will take place before Lula's trip to the Caribbean island, where he will meet with his Cuban counterpart, Miguel Díaz-Canel, and will participate in the meetings of the Group of 77 and China (September 15 and 16), a United Nations economic summit with developing countries.

Exame magazine indicates that Brazil's ties with Cuba deteriorated under the administration of the ultra-right-leaning former president Jair Bolsonaro (2019-2022), although they were never completely broken.

It notes that "since taking office in January, Lula has sought to rebuild relations with Havana and Venezuela, and met with Diaz-Canel on the sidelines of a global financial summit in Paris earlier this year."

This created an opening for businessmen eager to strengthen trade relations, according to Jorge Viana, president of the Brazilian Export and Investment Promotion Agency (APEX), which is leading the trip. "We have the opportunity to resume our trade relations after the previous Brazilian government sidelined Cuba," Viana notes in a statement.

"It makes no sense for Brazil to turn its back on the countries of Central America and the Caribbean, including Cuba, as we did in the last four years," he refers.

Brazil is the fourth largest supplier of goods to Cuba, behind only Spain, China and the United States, according to APEX.

But the volume of its exports in 2022 was little more than half of what it sent to the island 10 years ago.

The trip will include businessmen from the air transport, agriculture, energy and health sectors.

APEX specifies that food, industrial machinery, transportation equipment and chemicals are the areas with the greatest export opportunities to Cuba.

It also expects the creation of a commercial air route linking Sao Paulo and Havana, the press release reveals.

Former Foreign Minister Celso Amorim, head of the Special Advisor's Office of the Presidency of Brazil, declared in August that his recent visit to Havana "was an express determination" of Lula "to symbolize the interest in political relations".

He confirmed the visit of Brazilian businessmen to Cuba which will cover "several issues, including agriculture". Experts from the Ministry of Health will also visit the Caribbean nation, he corroborated.

He detailed that the fact that Lula sent him a letter "symbolizes the desire to bring Brazil closer to Cuba. To improve again, if possible, the relationship, which was very close and will continue to be so", he stressed. (Source: Prensa Latina)

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