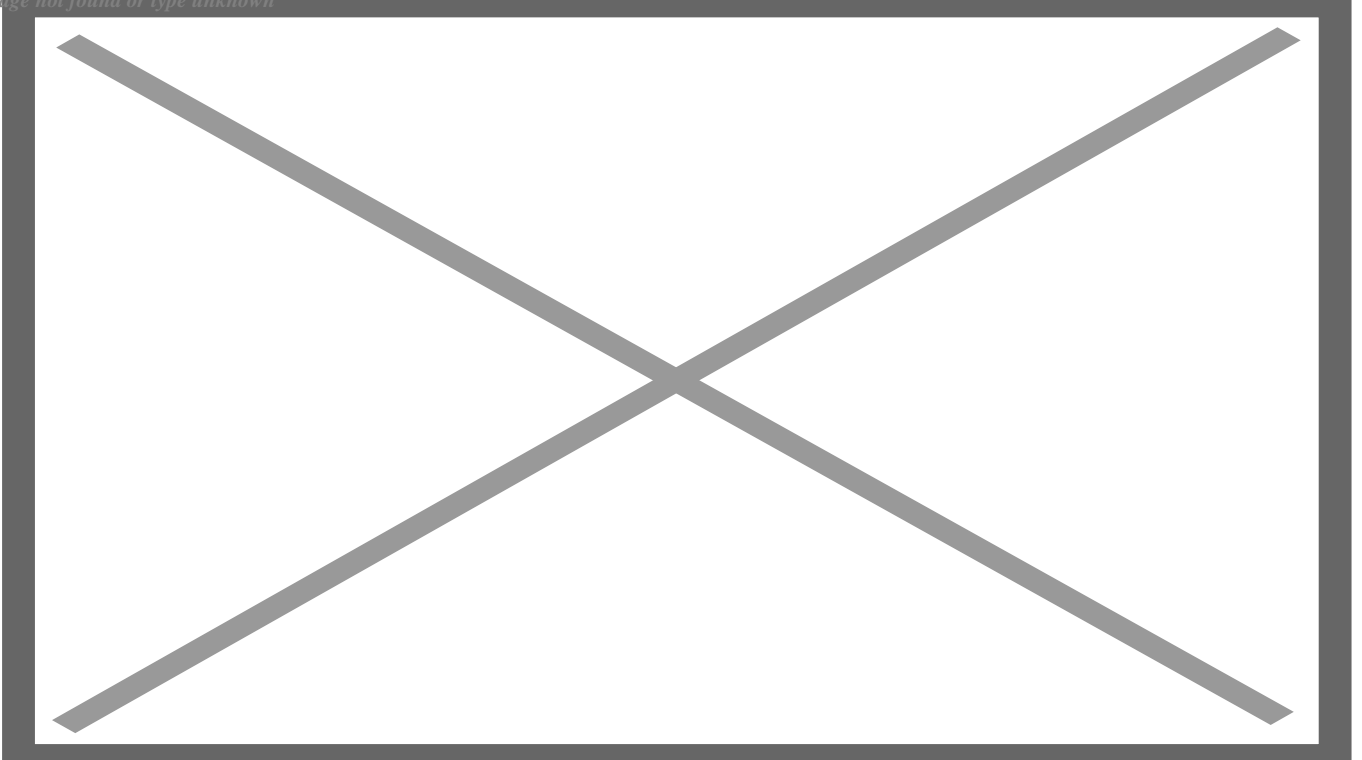


# *The Caribbean is dignity and courage*

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By María Josefina Arce

Strong and lasting ties have been forged between Cuba and the Caribbean Community for more than half a century, since 1972, when Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, defying U.S. pressure, established diplomatic relations with the Greater Antilles.

That courageous and sovereign gesture marked the beginning of the breaking of the diplomatic isolation imposed on our country by Washington, with the complicity of the OAS, the Organization of American States. That is why December 8 has a special significance; it is celebrated as Cuba-CARICOM Day, the Community of Caribbean States.

The historic leader of the Cuban revolution, Fidel Castro, summed it up in a few words when he stated that "To say Caribbean is to say dignity, it is to say courage, it is to say honor".

From that moment on, a transcendental stage would begin in Cuba's relations with its neighbors in the area, with whom it shares much more than its location in the Caribbean Sea.

Friendship, respect and solidarity have characterized bilateral ties for more than five decades. Cuba and the insular Caribbean are an example of South-South cooperation.

Health, education and the fight against climate change are areas in which collaboration stands out. More than 6,000 young people from countries in the region have been trained in Cuba.

During the COVID 19 pandemic, the existing brotherhood was once again demonstrated. At the request of the governments of the Caribbean nations, Brigades of the Henry Reeve International Contingent of Doctors Specialized in Situations of Disasters and Serious Epidemics were sent to those territories.

In turn, our brothers in the area, in a great effort, sent donations of the necessary supplies to face the disease caused by the new coronavirus, in view of the tightening of the U.S. blockade against Cuba in the midst of the world health emergency.

Another area of cooperation of great importance for all Caribbean residents has been in the management of natural disasters, given the high vulnerability of these island states. Dozens of specialists from the region have been trained in the archipelago and the early warning system has been extended to the entire area.

All these years the support of the Caribbean states in the different international forums for the struggle of the Cuban people against the genocidal U.S. blockade has been historic.

Cuba and its Caribbean neighbors have written in these years a true and beautiful history of brotherhood, respect and solidarity.

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