

# *Cuba and Britain Sign Agreements to Boost Bilateral Ties*

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Havana, October 31 (RHC) -- Cuba and Britain signed several agreements Thursday to boost bilateral cooperation in trade and sports, Cuban media reported.

British Minister of State for the Commonwealth and Foreign Office, Hugo Swire, and Cuban Deputy Foreign Investment and Trade Minister Antonio Carricarte signed a memorandum of understanding designed to promote trade and collaboration in tourism, agriculture, energy, infrastructure and biotechnology.

Swire, who is on an official visit to Cuba, indicated Britain's support for the economic reforms spearheaded by the government of Cuban President Raul Castro.

Britain's business sector is eager to explore the investment opportunities offered by Cuba, he added.

"We want Cuba to be better known among Britain's business community, and for trade to grow in both directions, in addition to British investment in Cuba," said Swire.

Swire and Cuban Deputy Foreign Minister Rogelio Sierra signed an accord to improve mechanisms for political consultations, including the topic of human rights. The two countries also signed a memorandum that seeks to expand cooperation in sports.

Swire praised Cuba's role in the international fight against the Ebola epidemic in West Africa and in the peace talks held in Havana between the Colombian government and the rebel Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia.

“Although we naturally have our differences, we work together where we can, including on the response to the Ebola epidemic, where Cuba is playing a vital international role,” the minister said.

“Cuba is sending hundreds of medical professionals to UK-run facilities in Sierra Leone on top of staff already in that country and in Guinea.”

The Foreign Office said Swire arrived in Cuba on Wednesday and leaves the Caribbean island on Saturday. A spokesman said he is slated to meet with ministers responsible for foreign affairs as well as trade, health and tourism to discuss ways Britain can build on its work in the country.

Swire's is the first visit by a British minister to the Caribbean country in a decade.

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