

# *Cuba and Lebanon Open Forum in Beirut Seeking Business, Investment*

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Beirut, October 16 (RHC-PL) -- Two ministers, representatives of other government agencies, and business representatives from Lebanon and Cuba held in Beirut today a second business forum, aimed at materializing bilateral investment projects and joint ventures. Organized by the Lebanese-Cuban Businessmen Council (Chnlc), the one-day meeting was presided over by Minister of Economy and Trade of the Arab country, Alain Hakim; and Minister for Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment of the Caribbean island, Rodrigo Malmierca.

Attractive areas such as pharmaceuticals, medicine production, tourism, services, particularly financial, food and others, are among the priorities of the meeting that intend to solidify much of what has already been discussed at a previous encounter held this year in Havana.

According to what they told Prensa Latina news agency, the two ministers agreed on the need to explore and diversify opportunities to invest Lebanese capital in Cuba, taking advantage of the facilities provided in the legal, social, economic, professional and infrastructural fields.

For Hakim, developing "high-level" economic and trade relations with the island is essential, especially in the scenario that favors the resumption of diplomatic relations between the Caribbean country and the United States.

"We believe in the ties between the two countries, and we think Cuba and Lebanon can develop a high-level relationship in trade and business," Hakim said, recalling that for that reason, an exploratory mission was sent to the Havana six months ago.

In turn, Malmierca expressed confidence in the realization of business and the prospect that they are extended, judging from the sectors represented in the delegation he leads, and the new Cuban investment law.

Cuba enacted some regulations to facilitate trade exchange and foreign investment with a portfolio of more than 200 projects expected to expand soon, and continues working on the strengthening of the Mariel Special Development Zone (ZEDM).

Malmierca traveled to Beirut accompanied by the President of the Chamber of Commerce of Cuba, Orlando Hernandez, investment director of the Ministry of Foreign Trade, Deborah Rivas, and North Africa and Middle East department director of the same ministry, Rafael Jimeno.

The Cuban delegation is also made up of officials from the Ministries of Tourism and Industry, specialists of the Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology and the ZEDM, a project that attracts CHNLC president, Ali Kazma, and other 23 entrepreneurs when they visited it some months ago.

Upon arriving in Beirut, the Cuban minister was received by Lebanese Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil and held a meeting which he defined as "very friendly and very good."

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