

Venezuela to strengthen relations with Russia and China in New Year

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**Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro during interview with Ignacio Ramonet, January 1, 2021.
(Photo: AVN)**

Caracas, January 2 (RHC)-- President Nicolas Maduro says he plans to further strengthen Venezuela's ties with Russia and China, as well as Iran, among other allies in 2021 in order to boost his homeland's economic status.

"The gate of our country is open to the world," Maduro said in an interview with Venezuelan news agency AVN Friday on the occasion of the New Year. "Undoubtedly, we will establish special relations with the

governments and nations of Russia, the People's Republic of China, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Cuba, India, as well as relations with Turkey and the countries of South Africa.”

Venezuela and Iran enjoy 70 years of relations which have featured considerable alignment over the past two decades, in clear opposition to Washington's unilateralist and interventionist foreign policy. Iran has, in recent years, been involved in a series of joint ventures worth several billion dollars in energy, agriculture, housing, and infrastructure sectors in Venezuela.

Both countries are hugely rich in resources. Venezuela possesses the world's biggest oil deposit while Iran owns the fourth largest oil and first largest gas reserves of the world.

In clear defiance of U.S. sanctions, five Iranian vessels carried out fuel delivery missions to Venezuela between May and June last year, with another flotilla also delivering the equipment that the Latin American country needed to shore up its gasoline industry, which has been hit hard by American sanctions.

Venezuela experienced political turmoil when opposition figure Juan Guido unilaterally declared himself "interim president" in January 2018, followed by a U.S.-backed botched coup against the elected government. There was also an attempt at assassinating Maduro in a drone strike the same year. Guido's self-proclamation and his coup attempt received backing from the U.S. administration of Donald Trump.

Washington has imposed several rounds of crippling sanctions against the oil-rich South American country aimed at ousting Maduro and replacing him with Guaido. The sanctions, which include the illegal confiscation of Venezuelan assets abroad and an economic blockade, have caused enormous suffering for millions of people in the country.

In his interview on Friday with journalist Ignacio Ramonet, Maduro assured that “the year 2021 will be a decisive year to end the economic siege of imperialism and the start of the era of recovery and reconstruction.”

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