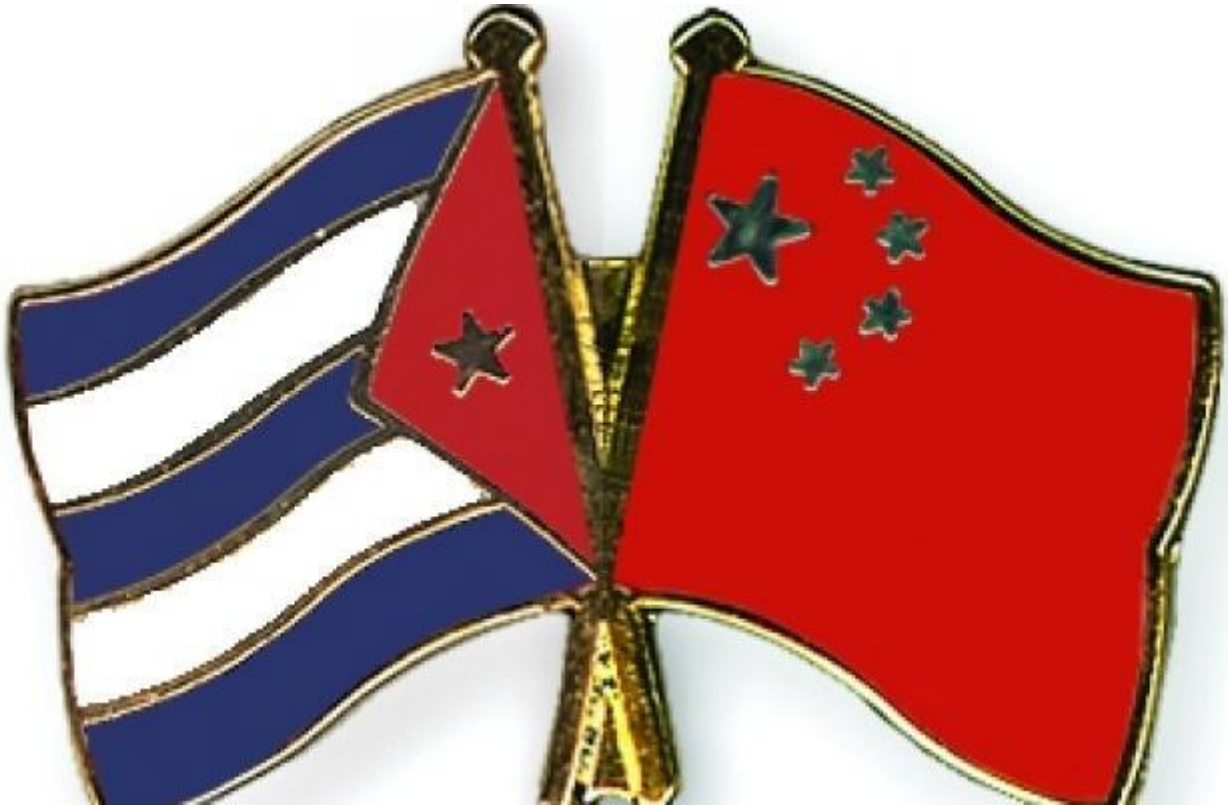


# *China and Cuba: Long Distance Cannot Hinder Close Friendship*

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Havana, July 15 (RHC) — China's President Xi Jinping said that bilateral relations between his country and Cuba are an example of unity and cooperation between developing countries and that he is looking forward to meeting with President Raul Castro to evaluate and plan the future development of bilateral links.

Cuba-China relations have passed the tests posed by international ups and downs to become an example of unity and cooperation, Xi said to reporters just before kicking off his current Latin American tour.

The Chinese head of state recalled that in 1960, Cuba became the first country in the western hemisphere to establish diplomatic relations with the new China, which opened an important chapter for bilateral links.

The two countries work hand in hand, advancing in the construction of socialism with their own characteristics, Xi noted, and stressed bilateral support in issues relevant to Cuban and Chinese vital interests in the regional and international arenas.

Cuba and China are on a crucial development stage, so they need to use opportunities for joint development, said Xi and noted that Havana and Beijing must strengthen high-level contacts, and step up cooperation in priority sectors, such as agriculture, infrastructure, energy and mining, tourism,

biotechnology and renewable energy sources.

The Chinese leader used a Chinese verse saying: “Long distance cannot hinder close friendship.”

Xi Jinping is expected to arrive in Cuba next week on an official visit and meet with President Raul Castro and other government officials.

The Cuba-China balance of trade has been estimated at nearly two billion dollars. The trade exchange includes machinery and equipment, cutting-edge technology, vehicles and parts, steel, textiles, domestic appliances, home items and medications, nickel, sugar, cigars and liquors, pharmaceuticals and biomedical products.

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