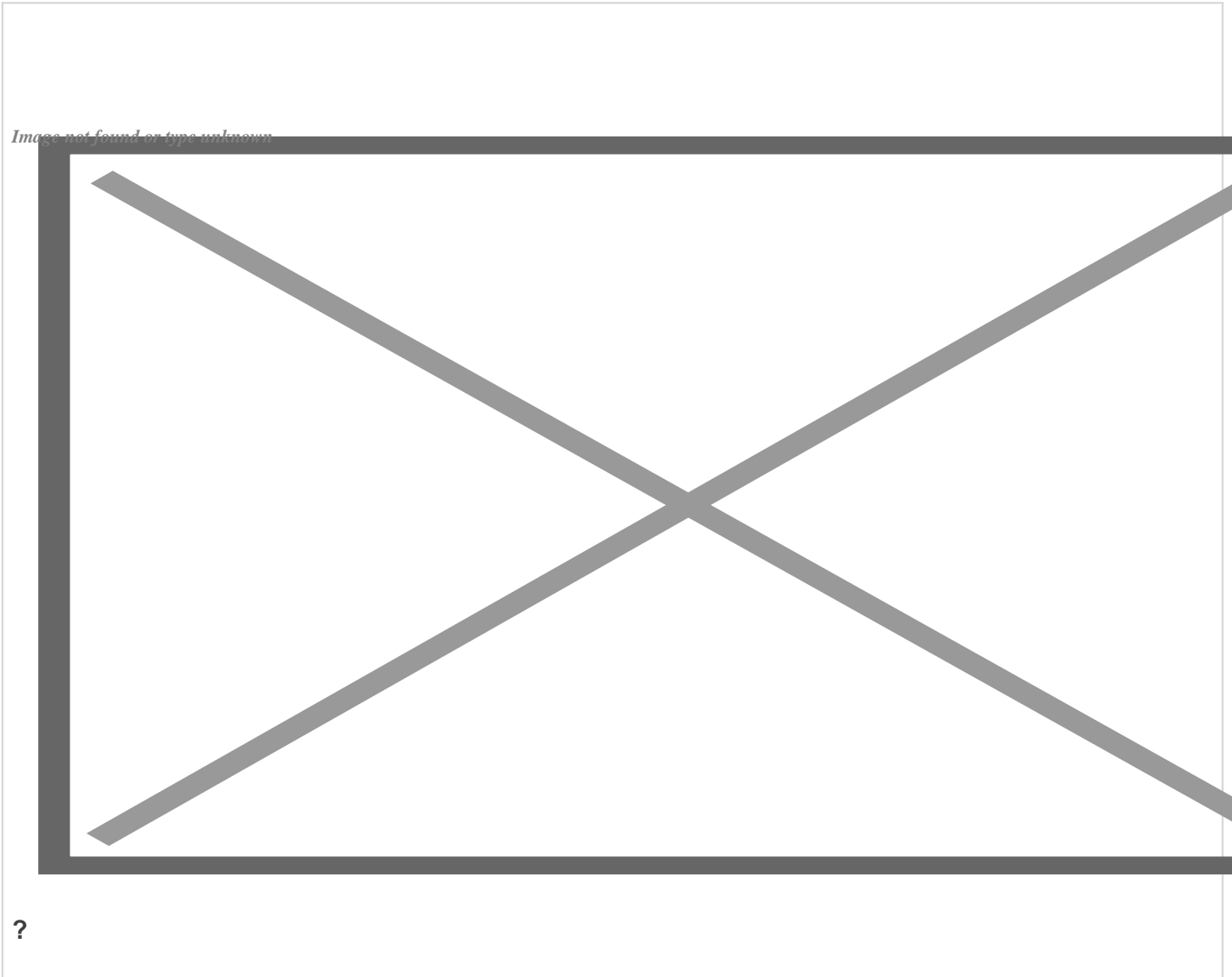


Venezuela and Iran sign 20-year cooperation plan during Maduro visit



Tehran, June 11 (RHC)-- Venezuela and Iran have signed a 20-year "cooperation road map" during a state visit by President Nicolas Maduro to Tehran as the two oil-rich countries reeling under United States sanctions pledged to boost bilateral ties.

The Venezuelan president met his Iranian counterpart Ebrahim Raisi on Saturday at the Saadabad Palace in Tehran a day after arriving in the Iranian capital with a high-level political and economic delegation on a two-day trip.

The cooperation roadmap was signed by the foreign ministers of the two countries in the presence of their respective presidents. The delegations from both countries discussed details of the future cooperation, as the leaders focused on issues of mutual cooperation on economic issues amid crippling economic crises due to sanctions.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran’s foreign policy has always been to have relations with independent countries, and Venezuela showed that it has had incredible resistance against threats and sanctions by enemies and imperialism,” Raisi said, sitting next to Maduro.

Like Venezuela, he added, Iran has also faced sanctions by the U.S. and others for decades, but has chosen to regard them as an opportunity to move the country forward. Raisi said Iran has been successful in breaking the “maximum pressure” policy that Washington has embarked on since unilaterally abandoning Iran’s 2015 nuclear deal with world powers in 2018.

Despite several rounds of talks, no breakthrough has been achieved to revive the landmark deal that would likely grant sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on Tehran’s nuclear program.

Maduro also praised Venezuela’s “resistance against sanctions and imperialism” since 2017, and said his country aims to use Iran’s experiences in this area and will centre future cooperation on science and technology.

The Venezuelan president hailed Iran’s “miracles” in developing its agriculture sector amid historic droughts, and said the two countries aimed to develop ties in this sector.

A direct flight between Tehran and Caracas will be established from July 18, Maduro announced, expressing hope that it will help more Iranians consider Venezuelan cities and natural landmarks as tourist destinations.

“I believe that our future will be one of the pleasing and solid friendships,” he said. “The future of the world is one of equality and justice and standing up against imperialism. We must build this future together.”

In an interview with state-run Spanish-language HispanTV on Friday, Maduro had also praised Iran’s help with its dilapidated oil industry. Raisi, who had sent his petroleum minister Javad Owji to meet with Maduro earlier this year, on Saturday promised cooperation will continue.

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