

# *Venezuela and Portugal to Deepen Bilateral Ties*

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Caracas, January 17 (RHC-teleSUR) -- Venezuelan and Portuguese officials will hold high level talks in April to discuss deepening bilateral ties, a minister in Caracas said Friday.

In a statement to teleSUR, Venezuela's communication minister Jacqueline Faria said the meeting will focus on discussion on ways to improve existing trade and investment deals between the two nations, along with the possibility of new projects in the future.

Some bilateral initiatives likely to be discussed include Portuguese cooperation projects in Venezuela's housing and energy sectors, along with construction of a new highway out of Caracas.

When completed, the Venezuelan government says the highway will boast seven tunnels, constructed with Portuguese assistance.

Faria's announcement came as President Nicolas Maduro arrived in Lisbon for a meeting with Portugal's deputy prime minister Paulo Portas.

According to Faria, some of the topics of discussion set for the April meeting were briefly covered during Friday's meeting, but will be discussed in greater depth in three months.

Maduro is now expected to head back to Caracas, after an international trip that began in Beijing China. After attending the first joint forum between China and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States in Beijing last week, he embarked on a tour that took him to Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Algeria.

The Venezuelan leader has stated that the aim of the tour has been to strengthen the economy and socio-economic development of both his own country, and of those fellow members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

“This tour has one solo objective: to strength the income of our country through oil. Socio-economic development has been invested in, a strong OPEC has been built, this is what we are defending,” he said.

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