

# *Cuba and Panama Strengthen Strategic Partnership*

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Cuba and Panama, two nations with strategic geographical position in our Hemisphere, are currently examining, on the occasion of the State visit to Cuba by Panamanian President Juan Carlos Varela, ways to strengthen their links in such important areas as the economy, commerce, health, education and culture.

Since colonial times, when the European powers became aware of the composition of our Hemisphere, Cuba's importance became relevant as the key to access to the Caribbean and the rest of Latin America.

Panama, thanks to the canal that links the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, is a reference point for world commerce that gained its sovereignty and full enjoyment of its geographical position just some decades ago thanks to the wisdom of President Omar Torrijos, a reference point in Panamanian history.

Both nations, Cuba and Panama, share the painful experience of having suffered from the insatiable appetite of the United States, once that country became aware of its dominant imperialistic power on the world

scene.

The growing ties and links between Panama and Cuba go back to the firm stand of President Juan Carlos Varela to include Cuba, with the support of other Latin American and Caribbean nations, as a full participant in the Summit of the Americas held in Panama earlier this year.

The delegation, headed by President Varela, includes high officials of his Government as well as a group of Panamanian investors and entrepreneurs, is seeking opportunities to complement the widening of the Panama Canal and the operation of new industries at the Mariel Special Development Area, just west of Havana, a deep water port capable of receiving the huge vessels that will be crossing the expanded Panama Canal from next year onwards.

The Panamanian delegation is also examining the Cuban portfolio of new investment opportunities, which includes two hundred and forty six projects worth almost eight billion dollars, covering eleven prioritized industrial sectors. These and other Cuban investment opportunities are being examined at a joint meeting in Havana with the participation of President Varela and his delegation.

A migration agreement has been already signed as one of the concrete results of the Presidential visit. The Panamanian Chief Executive was scheduled to visit today the Latin American School of Medicine, where Panamanian youths, men and women, are being prepared as medical doctors to expand sanitary attention to the Panamanian people.

The Panamanian President's current visit to Cuba is an appropriate opportunity to recall words issued by Cuba's National Hero, Jose Marti, in 1894, after a visit to Panama, Costa Rica and Jamaica:

The Cuban National Hero wrote on that occasion: "Truly, the revolution in Cuba, crown and guarantee of that of Our America, will find in due time huge avenues opened. It will not be lost in the ground and it will not fall into the sea. It will be supported by a continent".

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