

Minsk plays host to the second meeting of the Belarusian-Cuban commission on cooperation in science and technology

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Minsk plays host to the second meeting of the Belarusian-Cuban commission on cooperation in science and technology. The agenda of the visit features signing of agreements on bilateral cooperation between the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment of Cuba, the Politechnik science park of the Belarusian National Technical University and the Minsk Technopark. The parties consider cooperation prospects and coordinate the executive program on sci-tech and innovative cooperation for 2018-2020 which is to be signed in August.

In recent years our contacts have intensified, and this was confirmed by Ambassador of Belarus to Cuba Alexander Alexandrov, who kindly provided an interview to our Radio:

Our partner relations with Cuba have been proven in the course of many years of interaction. It was here that in 1998 Belarus opened its first Embassy in Latin America and the Caribbean. Today Cuba remains an anchor point and one of our most important allies in the region both in terms of foreign policy – with our positions being very similar on most points of the international agenda – and with respect to economic cooperation. This is what makes the foundation for the

Belarus-Cuba dialogue, and together with our Cuban colleagues we are working now to expand the number of areas where we interact and promote further growth in those fields where we cooperate traditionally. For instance, to advance our contacts in R&D we have set up a joint Commission on cooperation in science and technology. It first convened in Havana in May 2016 and proved to be very efficient. An agreement was reached for researchers from both countries to work together with the view to developing special agents for protection of economically important plants.

In 2014 the countries signed an intergovernmental agreement on mutual supplies. As part of it, Cuba supplies Belarus with some of its highly effective medicines getting Belarusian agricultural produce, vehicles and components in return.

Positive results were brought about thanks to the participation of a Belarusian delegation last autumn in the international Havana fair, one of the largest events of its kind in Latin America and the Caribbean. For the first time in the history of our relations a national exposition of Belarus was organized. It extensively represented the export potential of Belarusian enterprises subordinate to the Industry Ministry, as well as scientific organizations and pharmaceutical companies.

Concrete agreements have been reached both in well-established areas of our cooperation across a number of industries and with regard to certain new R&D projects.

The Ambassador also described in some detail the current level of economic cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and the Republic of Cuba:

Talking about our political dialogue we have already pointed out the constructive and friendly nature of our relations, and economic aspects of our interaction follow in the same vein. Our countries register obvious progress in this field. In 2017 the trade turnover between our countries reached 60 million USD. Our exports to Cuba are dominated by trucks, agricultural machinery and components produced by some of our leading enterprises, including MAZ, MTZ, Amkodor, Minsk motor plant, Belagromash. Importantly, the products of the Belarusian heavy engineering industry enjoy success in Cuba, which is supported by the positive experience Cubans had with it back in the times of the Soviet Union. About 60% of all Cuban tractors were made in Belarus. Over the years the Cuban users have come to appreciate its cost effectiveness and reliability, and now prefer Belarus-made products to many others. At the same time, competition is growing with producers from other countries. In this respect, it is very important to ensure the use of proper financial instruments to support our export, which is done with the assistance of the Belarusian Development Bank. Today Belarusian exporters and our Cuban partners are looking forward to a new export credit line from the Bank,

which will help boost our exports and consolidate our standing in Cuba. We are also looking at some new areas to cooperate in. Recently we launched a successful project to supply Cuba with Belarus-made home appliances, including fridges and cookers, which have already gained a reputation with the local population. As to Cuban supplies to Belarus, sugar makes the bulk of those. Currently we are also working to develop cooperation in pharmaceuticals, which means projects to develop and produce new kinds of medications.

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