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**Cuban President Considers Relations with Russia Are Exemplary**

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Cuba and Russia have relations that are an example for the whole world, President Miguel Diaz-Canel said on Friday, after an busy day of meetings with political leaders and officials in Moscow.

Relations between Cuba and Russia are referential and an example for the whole world of ties between a great power and a small island, where links of peoples and friendship prevail, with ties that are impossible to destroy. We are going to continue to foster that friendship, he noted.

Diaz Canel, who is on his first visit to Russia and on his first tour abroad as Cuba's head of State, met in the Kremlin with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, who conveyed his best wishes and cordial greetings to Comrade Raul Castro.

Relations between Russia and Cuba have evolved over decades and were initially marked by a special strategic nature. We are united by friendship, support and mutual help,' Putin said.

The Russian president highlighted the 17-percent growth in bilateral trade last year.

We have made important achievements in several strategic areas for the development of our countries. Our relations are at a high level, especially in the political field, said the Cuban leader, who invited Putin to visit Cuba in 2019.

Diaz-Canel also met with the speaker of the Duma (Russian Lower House), Viacheslav Volodin, and the president of the Council of the Federation (Senate), Valentina Matvienko, as well as the leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, Guennadi Ziuganov.

During the meetings, the Cuban president thanked Russia for its support for his country's just struggle against the US blockade, and described as significant his arrival in Moscow on Thursday, coinciding with Cuba's new victory at the United Nations.

It was sentimental to arrive in Russia, the first people who came to support Cuba when the US blockade was imposed on us, precisely when we learned about our victory at the UN, which was, moreover, 10 defeats in only one by the United States, said, Diaz-Canel when commenting on the approval by 189 votes in favor and only two votes against (United States and Israel) of the resolution submitted by Cuba at the UN to end the economic, commercial and financial blockade of the United States.

The Cuban leader stressed that now, when we update our economic model and when it is vital for us to develop strategic sectors, such as energy, tourism or biotechnology, we have the presence of Russian companies in those spheres, he stressed.

The Cuban leader considered that it is necessary to build bridges, instead of building walls in the world and, in that regard, he pointed out that relations with the United States have undergone a rollback, after what we had achieved with Barack Obama's administration to begin a process of reestablishing diplomatic relations, he noted.

With US President Donald Trump, everything has gone backwards, like the blockade, because he has tightened the financial persecution and the measures to restrict US citizens from traveling to Cuba and prevent relations between US business people and Cuba, Diaz-Canel underlined.

Trump also reinforced his Cold War rhetoric and his administration is very prolific in warnings and threats against Cuba, he pointed out.

For his part, Voloshin said that he expects this visit to boost bilateral relations and that more Russian tourists will go to Cuba. In 2017, more than 100,000 Russian holidaymakers traveled to the Caribbean island, he recalled.

Diaz-Canel emphasized at his meetings the importance of Russia's role in the world with its stance in the international arena and its contribution to the solution of conflicts in the world.

The Cuban president's visit confirms the close strategic partnership between the two countries, which oppose the policy of sanctions and blockades that endanger security and stability in international relations.

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