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Obama at Business Forum: Congress Should Lift the Blockade Once and for All

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As part of his agenda in Havana, the visiting head of state spoke with Cuban and U.S. entrepreneurs met at a business forum organized by the Chamber of Commerce of the Republic of Cuba, in which the two parties explored opportunities for commercial exchanges.

Obama acknowledged the process of changes in Cuba as part of the updating of its economic and social model, in which the opening of self-employment, "a branch generating employment," falls within.

While addressing an audience also composed of representatives of the state and cooperative sectors, the U.S. President expressed his confidence in the potential of Cubans.

The head of the White House acknowledged the high educational level, the capacity to create and the wit of Cubans, attractions to capture the investment of U.S. sectors, among them the Cuban-American community.

Obama said that his country wants to become a trading partner of Cuba, while mentioning the authorization of his government for the companies Cleber LLC, Starwood Hotels and Airbnb, of house renting, to have a presence in the Caribbean island.

Cuba has first class physicians and nurses, pointed out the U.S. president while referring to what Miriam Portuondo, a businesswoman in the field of Cuban health, expressed at the forum.

While making an allusion to the speech on Cuba's medical potential, he stated that "it's very interesting, since we agreed with the Cuban government to establish and develop joint scientific cooperation in the medical field."

"I have always believed that knowledge is something that has to be shared, no matter the political system we may have. Diseases are the same, therefore, working together to find solutions is something very important," he underlined.

The U.S. head of state has repeated on several occasions, since December 17, 2014, that the U.S. policy of the blockade failed, and has asked the U.S. Congress to lift the unjust laws codifying the siege to the Caribbean island.

Prior to this meeting, Obama made a statement to the press after holding official talks with Army General Raul Castro, President of the councils of State and Ministers.

In this context, he expressed that the future of Cubans will be decided by Cubans themselves and no one else; "Cuba has the right to be sovereign," he pointed out.

His trip to the Caribbean island takes place scarcely 15 months after the historic events of December 17, 2014, when the presidents of Cuba and the United States announced the decision to reestablish diplomatic relations after over five decades of breaking-off.

This visit, the first by a head of state to revolutionary Cuba, is considered to be an important step in the road towards the normalization of bilateral ties, for which the lifting of the blockade on the island and the return of the territory occupied by the Guantanamo Naval Base will be determining factors.

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