

# *Cuba and Venezuela Mark 12th Anniversary of Medical Cooperation*

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Caracas, August 22 (RHC-teleSUR)-- Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro has commemorated the 12th anniversary of the Sandino Commitment, an agreement which led to the Cuban-Venezuelan visual health care program, Operation Miracle.

On August 21, 2005, Fidel Castro and Hugo Chavez signed the historic Sandino Commitment, a plan which pledged to help vulnerable communities access affordable eye care and surgery through the Operation Miracle program.

Since then, nearly six million people across Latin American have benefited from the program, leading to significant reduction in preventable blindness over the last decade.

In a Facebook post in tribute to the agreement, President Maduro wrote: "This agreement was aimed at providing visual health care to the Venezuelan people ... but it wasn't limited to our country. It is a plan of international cooperation that has reached poor people across Latin America and the Caribbean."

Since it began, the program has expanded to poor communities in at least 21 Latin American countries

and 14 Caribbean countries. Some of the most common eye ailments treated surgically under the program are pterygium, cataracts, glaucoma, and strabismus. Free corrective eyeglasses have also been provided as part of the program.

The World Health Organization, the WHO, has also commended the program's efforts to make visual health care affordable for people suffering from blindness or corrective visual deficiency.

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