

# *Cuba Seeks Better Ties with European Union*

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Havana, April 26 (RHC) -- Cuba seeks to improve bilateral relations with the European Union (EU), but as equals with mutual respect, Cuban Vice President Miguel Diaz-Canel said Friday.

"We are open to dialogue with the European community based on respect ... as equals," Diaz-Canel told reporters just days ahead of an initial round of talks toward eventual political dialogue and bilateral cooperation to be held in Havana on April 29th and 30th.

Diaz-Canel made the remarks at the Colombian embassy in Havana, where he was signing the condolence book for Colombian writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez, who passed away last week in Mexico City.

The talks between Cuba and the European block will mainly focus on "establishing procedures and a road-map for negotiations," according to EU sources.

Cuba is the only Latin American country with which the European bloc has not signed any bilateral agreements, though more than half of the EU's 28 member states have individually signed bilateral cooperation accords and memorandums of understanding on political exchange with the Caribbean country.

Ties between Cuba and the EU have been strained since the bloc adopted the so-called "common position" in

1996, which basically aligns Europe's policy towards Cuba with Washington's.

In February, Europe initiated a rapprochement by proposing dialogue with Cuba, and in March Cuba agreed, opening the door to the normalization of ties.

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