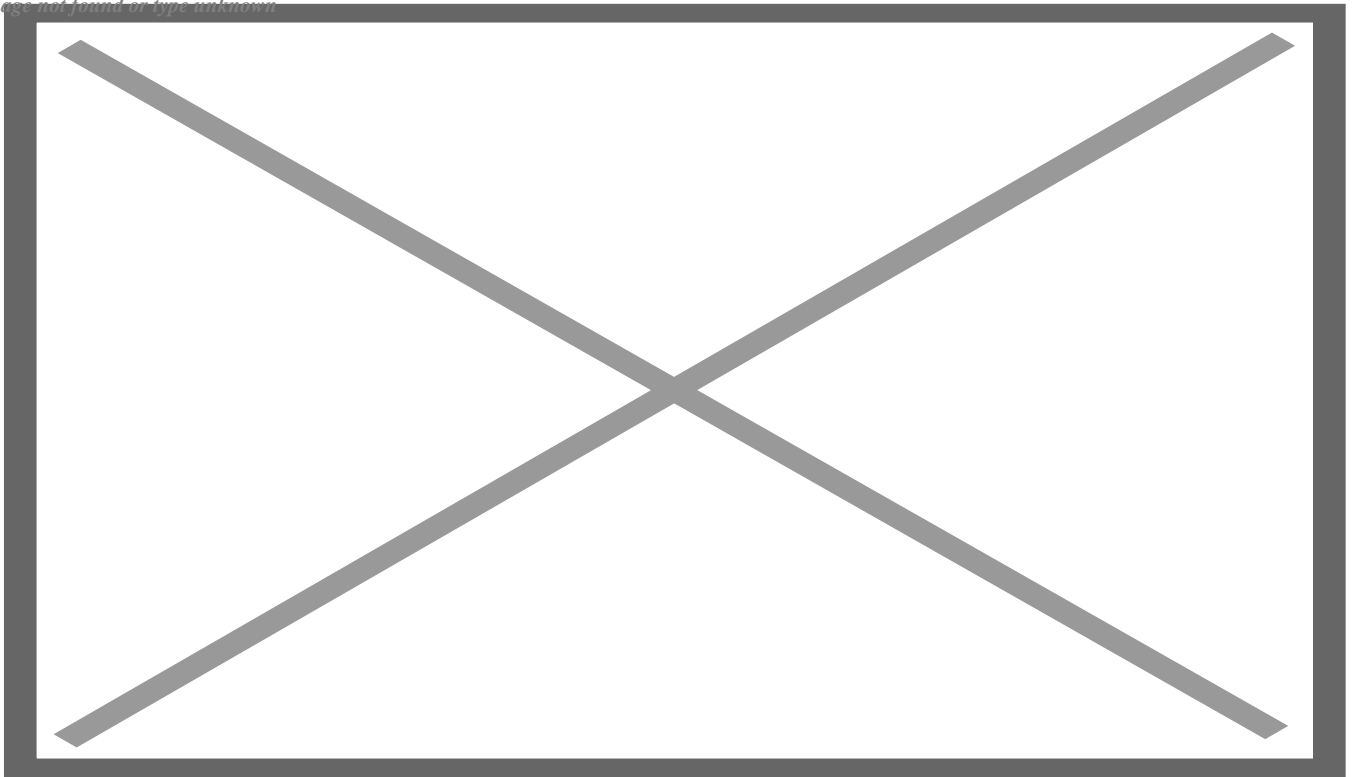


Since the 1960s, the Cuban and South African peoples have expressed support for one another

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By Roberto Morejón

President Miguel Diaz-Canel's visit to South Africa, with a view to participating in the 15th Summit of the BRICS group, also allows exchanges between the leaders of Cuba and the African nation, with strong ties of brotherhood.

Although official ties were established 29 years ago as part of the first act of foreign policy of the new South Africa after the fall of apartheid, there is evidence of previous exchanges between the two peoples.

In the early 1960s, the South African fighter against the system of racial segregation in South Africa, Nelson Mandela, was imprisoned and Cuba denounced the outrage.

Also in the largest of the Antilles, young people from the southern country enrolled in the struggle against the white elite regime received medical care or professional training.

However, the crucial stage of the ties began in 1994, after Mandela's inauguration as the first black president of South Africa.

The historic leader Fidel Castro was present at the event, an opportunity in which both dignitaries expressed mutual admiration and respect.

Subsequently, Cuba and South Africa signed agreements in the field of public health and in 1996 the first 200 doctors arrived in Pretoria, an experience that has continued up to the present.

The two countries extended cooperation to science, technology, agriculture, housing, education, water and sanitation, information and communications.

More than 140 Cuban technicians have carried out social works in recent years, a task that could be expanded.

More than 2,500 young South Africans have been trained in Cuba in different specialties, mainly medicine.

Authorities of that nation have shown interest in the experience of the largest of the Antilles in early childhood, technical and professional education and educational technology.

Leaders of both countries will be able to comment on these and other matters of interest, although President Miguel Díaz-Canel's visit is mainly aimed at taking part in the BRICS summit, since Cuba holds the pro tempore presidency of the Group of 77 plus China.

Cuba and South Africa, forever twinned by the significance of the Cuito-Cuanavale battle in southern Africa, have ratified the will to strengthen political dialogue and cooperation.

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