

# *Economic Update October 1*

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## **Cuba Promotes Official Who Has Led Market-style Reforms**

Cuban President Raul Castro granted more authority to the man who has led the campaign to modernize Cuba's socialist economy, naming Marino Murillo, as *Economy and Planning Minister*. Former Economy Minister, Adel Yzquierdo, 69 years of age, was demoted from minister to deputy minister but will retain his position on the 14-member Political Bureau of the Communist Party.

Murillo, who is 53 and also a member of the politburo and one of Cuba's vice presidents, takes over as head of the ministry in an attempt to give more impetus to the reforms that Cuba has been implementing in recent years.

"It is necessary to take the process of modernizing the economy and planning to a higher level," the statement said, adding that Marino will retain his position as chief of the commission charged with implementing the reforms.

## **Cuba to Host Intl. Workshop on Renewable Energy**

An *International Workshop on the Development of Renewable Energy Sources*, mainly gasification of forest biomass, will be held from Oct.6th-8th, in Havana, said organizers.

It is the most important project implemented by the *United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)* in Cuba, ongoing in the special municipality of Isle of Youth, explained in a press conference Maria Tomas, commercial specialist of energy, research, development and services.

Jorge Luis Isaac, a specialist of public service firm at *Union Electrica de Cuba*, said the project includes the use of wind energy and the technology of gasification of forest biomass in the Isle of Youth, considered for its size as a very climate change-related vulnerable site with difficulties for energy supply.

This technique means the conversion of forest industry wastes into fuel gas through a thermo-chemical process to generate electricity or heat for the industry as at least, 1.5 kg of biomass is needed to produce 1 kilowatt.

The project was signed in 2005 and went through several phases up to now, including the training of staff, the creation of firms to promote renewable energy sources and the transfer of technologies for the design, production and operation of forest biomass gasifiers.

To introduce this technology in Cuba, UNIDO donated a forest biomass gasification plant, located in Cocodrilo town, in the Isle of Youth, to supply energy to a community of 80 houses and 230 inhabitants from waste generated by cleaning the forest.

The project, worth some 5.3 million USD, is supported by the *Global Environment Fund* under the *United Nations Environment Program* to implement actions to mitigate the effects of climate change and develop renewable energy sources.

### **Cuba Expects 200 Cruise Ship Visits this Winter**

Cuba expects the visits of 200 cruise ships in the upcoming winter season, the largest number of calls by those boats ever, according to a Tourism official cited by local specialized media.

The visits by tourist and academic boats are expected to surpass their record in 2013, when the island received nearly 200 boats, said the president of the *International Tour Operators and Travel Agents Group Havanatur*, José Manuel Bisbé.

According to specialized media on line, the official announced that during the winter season, beginning October 29th, the island expects to receive the *British Cruise Ship Thomson Dreams* with capacity for 2 000 passengers, which is expected to call Havana harbor with no operations in that destination.

Also scheduled to arrive are the *Canadian Cuba Cruise*, which will take a 7-day tour around the island, while others like the *Panorama* and the *Star Clippers* cruisers are also on the winter agenda.

### **Cuba Receives in Brazil Prize to Best Tourist Destination**

The *Italian Club* in Sao Paulo was the venue of "The Best Ten of Tourism," a meeting where the most notable executives, companies and tourist destinations in 2014 received prizes in which Cuba's Consul General to Sao Paulo, Nelida Hernandez, received the award given to the island as *Best International Destination*, from the hands of Paulo Roberto Miranda, President of the *Brazil Travel News magazine*, which celebrated the 30th anniversary of its founding.

As expressed by the Cuban diplomat, the Cuban Tourism Ministry has been developing promotion strategies for the island's tourist offer to Brazil and it has been an effort of joint actions with Brazilian airlines, travel agencies and institutions, the *Cubadebate* Web site reported.

Roberto Silva, President of *Sanchattour*, a leader agency in selling the destination, said that this prize is a way to honor Cuba, by virtue of its tourist and commercial performance, of its capacity to innovate and create, and for being a destination in which clients are always satisfied.

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