

# CUBA

## Current Affairs

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## Embassy of Cuba in Cambodia

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### Facts on Cuba 2018:

#### January 5th:

Anniversary 300 of La Habana University.

#### January 11th:

Anniversary 200 of San Alejandro Fine Arts National School.

#### January 28th:

Anniversary 165th of José Martí birthday.



### The country celebrates its good fortune



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Photo: Alfonso Oscar

Cuba continues celebrations for another anniversary of the Revolution, a tribute to the hard-working people who have made it possible. After a January 1 when all of Cuba danced, the Ministry of Culture and local institutions announced the continuation of performances by children's choirs and concert bands.

The National Ballet of Cuba presented its customary Gala performance of Don Quixote, on New Year's Day, in Havana's Alicia Alonso Gran Teatro, while the presentation scheduled January 5 is dedicated to the 95th anniversary of the Federation of University Students (FEU).

Performances by the National Circus in Havana, La Colmenita children's theater company in Artemisa, and movie premieres will likewise continue, along with celebrations in one of the country's youngest provinces, Mayabeque, in honor of its 8th anniversary.

### Cuba, lowest infant mortality rate in its history - four per 1,000 live births



Maintaining infant mortality rate below five per 1,000 live for the 10th consecutive year is reason enough for Cuba to celebrate.

But even more extraordinary is that the country has achieved the lowest rate in its history in 2017, four per 1,000 live births.

Preliminary data, made available to Granma by the Medical Records and Health Statistics Directorate, indicates that

114,980 births took place, 1,892 less than in 2016, and 465 babies under a year of age died, 32 less than in 2016, the lowest number on record.

To appreciate just what this figure means, it's worth recalling that in 1970, 9,173 infants died, for a rate of 38.7 per 1,000 live births.

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## The legend has not died



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My generation was born in the first years following the triumph of the Revolution of 1959, and some of us in the months beforehand. When the bearded ones took Santiago, and later reached Havana in the caravan, the People's Republic of China had existed only a decade and the socialist states in Europe had barely reached their 15th anniversaries. The Soviet Revolution and its multi-national state, where many of us studied, had the longest history: 40 years of resistance to international capitalism and fascism. But, adolescents after all, in the 70s, we thought our parents and their revolutions were old – and some revolutionaries were, in fact, but not for reasons of age.

I recently revisited my photos from the 80s, when just graduated from the university, we brandished our youthful swords with enthusiasm, convinced that we were destined to establish, once and for all, revolutionary truth, reason, and justice, and I have drawn conclusions; our parents, back then, were younger than we are today. There were some who were never young, who did not attempt to change the world in their first years of life, even considering themselves self-sufficient. On the other hand, those who, as years and decades pass, never cease their efforts to change things, can never be considered old. Little by little we discovered that the revolutionary vanguard is timeless, although it is very much a product of its

time, connecting under the ground – where its roots grow – with previous vanguards, and is composed of men and women of all ages. If any doubts remain, Gómez and Martí, Baliño and Mella, can dispel them, but also the historic bridge that unites Martí and Fidel. If this were not the case, how can we explain the need revolutionary Latin Americans feel to call themselves Martianos, Sandinistas, Zapatistas, Bolivarianos, Fidelistas? The heroes of the past encourage those of the present, arguing with them like the passionate youth they are. They cannot be buried, they are comrades in the struggle. I am still moved remembering the magical instant when a million youth of all ages honored the Comandante en Jefe of the second half of the 20th century with the most stunning farewell a hero could receive: "I am Fidel," shouted the people with fists raised, which simply meant, "We will not let you die." Fidel had said the same of Martí, in the year of his centenary, but the times are different: Martí was abandoned, and Fidel is not.

We must learn how to identify a youth. Obviously, it's not about how smooth your skin is or how black your hair, nor is it of any use to ask someone their age. These are confusing facts. Those who assaulted the Moncada were apparently just like their peers, but while they attacked the garrison, many others danced in the Carnival. We must not trust those who insist on going along with the majority view established by fashion and the corporate media, or the fatigue they have caused. On the other hand, the phrase, "what young people think" lends itself to manipulation, an over-used trick employed by older people to justify their desertion. Consensus is constructed – this is the job of revolutionaries – and to the degree that it responds to the needs of the majority, of the humble, it approaches the truth or not. The vanguard of young revolutionaries is intergenerational. There is no Party of the under-aged – they have dissimilar interests like the rest of society. There is rather a Party of youth of any age, that upholds the Communist ideal.

It is true that every generation contri-

butes a different point of view, and that this perspective reveals aspects overlooked and sensibilities not previously perceived. However, the moral axis of revolutionaries is justice, regardless of the century in which they live – the justice that is possible and that which appears not to be. Thus, the inequalities of the day – the inevitable ones, those that are or appear to be "fair" – must be temporary. The revolutionary does not accept them. This is the horizon, the hazy image in the fog, toward which we are rowing: all the justice. No one who has disappeared rows, if he or she is not called upon. And the relief rowers are indispensable; it is imperative that we all play a role in this colossal effort.

**"The revolutionary vanguard is timeless, although it is very much a product of its time...**

**Those who, as years and decades pass, never cease their efforts to change the world, can never be considered old "**

The event that motivates this reflection is clear: the 60th year of the Revolution just begun. And we, its first children, are coming of age. The Cuban Revolution has now existed longer than the European socialist states. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is no longer. We have been the reference for other, more recent Latin American revolutions, without any one attempting to copy our methods.

Very close to our coasts, lying in wait, with claws at the ready, are the predators of big capital. Some friends argue for surrender. They say, empathically: We cannot ask the Cuban people to make more sacrifices. I ask myself if the surrender of our conquests is a minor sacrifice; if the dependent capitalism that awaits us in the stagnant water at the bottom of





the cliff, toward which they push us, would not increase the people's suffering and rob us of the possibility of fighting for a better future. All the shortcomings that revolutionaries know well, the dissatisfaction, can be resolved if, and only if, we are capable of preserving the Revolution.

As the 60th year progresses, the adolescents of today will imagine us to be very old; it is only natural. We will commemorate other important dates: the 150th anniversary, for example, of the beginning of the War of Independence. Once, Fidel said that in Cuba there had been but one Revolution, that begun by Céspedes at La Demajagua. He made this statement half a century ago, when we were very young and did not know that our parents were, too. On that occasion, Fidel said, "We, as revolutionaries, must find a way – when we say our duty is to defend this land, defend this homeland, defend this Revolution – to remember that we are not defending the

work of ten years, we must remember we are not defending the revolution of one generation: We must remember that we are defending the work of a hundred years!"

This also explains why the Cuban Revolution of 1959 did not go down the drain when the others collapsed. It explains the link between generations in a war that in order to be anti-colonial in the 19th century, and anti-imperialist in the 20th, needed to be anti-capitalist.

I am four months older than the Revolution that educated me, and as young as it is. A Revolution that renews itself, and to repeat, that re-founds itself. With the new year come an end and a beginning, that grant us the opportunity for mediation. I could find no better rallying cry than that of the young José Martí: "The legend has not died. Indomitable and strong, our sons prepare themselves, without fear, to repeat, and finish this time, once and for all, the feats of those brave, magnificent men who were nurtured by their roots. Those men who snatched their enemies' weapons from their belts, who with sticks from trees began a campaign that lasted ten years, who broke the horses in the morning to ride into battle that afternoon."

(Granma)



## Cuba-U.S. relations: Advances and setbacks



On December 17, 2014, the Presidents of Cuba and the United States, Raúl Castro Ruz and Barack Obama, simultaneously announced that diplomatic relations between the two countries would be reestablished and they would advance toward the normalization of bilateral ties. The return to Cuba of the three Cuban heroes, Gerardo, Ramón and Antonio, who remained unjustly imprisoned in U.S. prisons after 16 years, was also announced.

Both leaders acknowledged that the process toward normalization would be long, complex and difficult, but not impossible to achieve. The two countries assumed the challenge of this new stage, after several decades of intense confrontation. The position was the

same proclaimed since 1959 by the Comandante en Jefe of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro Ruz: our principles are not up for debate, much less negotiation, but solutions to problems can be found, and we can identify issues of common interest, under conditions of equality and mutual respect.

### THE FIRST TWO YEARS

The blockade was maintained, and the repeated calls by President Barack Obama on Congress to lift it were of no effect. Neither did the U.S. President use his executive powers to the maximum to advance in its dismantling. Nonetheless, Obama approved five packages of measures to modify some aspects of the blockade's implementation, which, although limited and insufficient, were positive steps that made it possible to reach the first commercial agreements in more than five decades. Spaces for dialogue and cooperation were created, which showed that despite the profound differences on several issues, solutions could be found, and a climate of "civilized coexistence" created, as has been reiterated several times by Army General Raúl Castro Ruz.

**" The blockade was maintained, and the repeated calls by President Barack Obama on Congress to lift it were of no effect."**

On January 20, 2017, Obama's term in office concluded. In just two years he helped to improve relations with Cuba and recognized the Cuban government as a legitimate interlocutor. However, he maintained the geopolitical projection of the United States over Cuba without any essential changes, albeit with a more subtle approach and in correspondence with the so-called "smart power" strategy of his administration's foreign policy.

### AMONG THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ADVANCES:

- Removal of Cuba from the unilateral list of state sponsors of terrorism.
- Reestablishment of diplomatic relations and the reopening of respective embassies.
- Creation of the Bilateral Commission, as a political mechanism to find solutions to problems that affect ties, and promote bilateral cooperation in areas of mutual benefit.
- Creation of the mechanism for dialogue in the area of Law Enforcement, with the objective of advancing cooperation in confronting transnational issues that affect the national security of both countries; and the establishment of eight technical working groups on confronting Terrorism, Drug Trafficking, Cybersecurity and Cybercrimes, Travel and Trade Security, Trafficking in Persons and Migration Fraud, Money Laundering and Financial Crimes, People Smuggling, and Judicial Assistance in Criminal Matters.
- Establishment of the Bilateral Economic Dialogue and of four technical working groups on Regulatory issues, Energy and Investments, Trade and Cooperation, and Industrial Property.

- Signing of the Joint Declaration to ensure regular, safe and orderly migration, which signalled the elimination of the so-called “wet foot-dry foot” policy and the parole program for Cuban medical professionals.

- Resumption of direct mail services, the reestablishment of regular flights by U.S. airlines, and the start of cruise operations between the U.S. and Cuba. Agreements regarding telecommunications services, and contracts with a U.S. company for the management of two hotels in Havana.



- Holding of 41 technical meetings between experts in areas such as: aviation and airport security; maritime and port security; law enforcement; combating drug trafficking, human trafficking and migration fraud; cybersecurity; money laundering; terrorism; health; agriculture; environment; hydrographic surveys and nautical charts, among others. During 2016, more than 1,200 cultural, scientific, academic and sports exchanges took place between the two countries.

- Increase in travel by U.S. citizens to Cuba. More than 284,000 Americans visited the island during 2016, representing 74% growth compared to the previous year. That same year, 229 business delegations visited the country and 23 commercial agreements were reached. Relations with 25 business associations were maintained, especially with the United States Chamber of Commerce.

- Signing of 22 bilateral cooperation instruments, covering areas such as health, agriculture, environmental protection and law enforcement.

#### IN THE LAST YEAR

**“ President Donald Trump delivered an anti-Cuban speech reminiscent of the Cold War era, full by threats, lies, incoherence and false accusations .”**

The favorable scenario created after December 17, 2014, coincided with the presidential race in the United States. Of the 17 candidates for the Republican Party, only two recognized the reestablishment of their country's relations with the island. One of them was Donald Trump, although he specified his intention to achieve a “better deal” with the Cuban government. In addition, he went on to say that he would consider opening one of his hotels in Cuba, and that the Caribbean nation had certain “potential” for investors.

That position changed for the sake of political expediency at the end of the campaign, when Trump established an alliance with the U.S. based extreme anti-Cuban right, to benefit from their electoral and political machinery in South Florida. From that moment on, the then presidential candidate moved to the other extreme and upped his offensive discourse against the Cuban Revolution and its historic leaders.

He has maintained this position since entering the White House. On June 16, 2017, he announced in Miami his administration's policy toward Cuba, which reversed part of the progress made in the last two years. In what was a significant setback in relations between the two countries, President Donald Trump delivered an anti-Cuban speech reminiscent of the Cold War era, full by threats, lies, incoherence and false accusations. In addition, he signed an interventionist and offensive memorandum against the island, which repealed that signed by Obama.

This anti-Cuban political environment attempted to curb the interest that U.S. companies had been showing in the Cuban market since 2014, and intended to affect the visits by U.S. citizens to the island. However, this flow of visitors did not cease, but in fact increased. Up to November 2017, some 579,288 Americans had traveled to Cuba, representing 248.7% growth compared to the same period the previous year.





This year also saw U.S. government allegations regarding “sonic attacks” against its diplomats in Havana, which apparently caused health problems. Without waiting for the results of the ongoing investigations or determining the causes of the alleged incidents, the U.S. government politicized the situation adopting measures that had negative consequences for the normal development of bilateral ties.

Among those with the greatest impact were the expelling of Cuban diplomats from the U.S., the dismantling of the Economic-Commercial Office of the Cuban Embassy in Washington, and the reduction in the number of U.S. officials in its Embassy in

Havana, which resulted in the suspension of the processing of visas for Cuban travelers and emigrants to the U.S. Cultural, sports and student events to be held between the two countries were also canceled, affecting the positive bilateral exchange up until then.

In this context, on November 9, 2017, the United States government put into effect the specific regulations to implement the blockade measures contained in the National Security Presidential Memorandum on Strengthening the Policy of the United States Toward Cuba, that Trump had signed in Miami, imposing new restrictions on travel and trade, signaling a tightening of the blockade and confirming the deterioration of bilateral relations.

This course of action responds to the demands of a small section of the anti-Cuban extreme right, led by Senator Marco Rubio, who publicly pressures the Executive to adopt more radical measures against Cuba, including the rupture of diplomatic relations and the closing of embassies. However, this group has not been able to reverse all the progress achieved since 2014, thanks to the support of broad sectors of U.S. society, that reject the positions of confrontation and advocate continuing the improvement in bilateral ties.

A diehard, minority sector in the U.S. cannot stomach the fact that the majority of Americans who travel to the neighboring country witness the joy of Cubans, their customs, culture, values, and enjoy the safe and peaceful atmosphere that reigns in its streets and cities. They are concerned that

U.S. citizens return to their homes with greater respect regarding Cuba’s history, and a better understanding of the effects of the blockade on the daily lives of this humble and hard-working people.

Beyond relations with the United States, Cuba continues to build a sovereign, independent, socialist, democratic, prosperous and sustainable nation. As Cuban President Raúl Castro Ruz affirmed in July this year, during his speech at the closing of the 9th period of ordinary sessions of the National Assembly of People’s Power 8th legislature, “Despite what the government of the United States does, or does not decide to do, we will continue advancing along the path sovereignly chosen by our people.”

**(Granma)**

**“ Beyond relations with the United States, Cuba continues to build a sovereign, independent, socialist, democratic, prosperous and sustainable nation.”**

## EU will Strive to End Blockade on Cuba, Federica Mogherini (+Photos)



Havana, Jan 4 (Prensa Latina) The European Union "will keep working to put an end to the blockade on Cuba", emphasized the head of the EU diplomacy, Federica Mogherini, during a master lecture given here at the San Geronimo College.

The blockade is not the solution, warned Mogherini, describing as obsolete and illegal the economic, financial and commercial siege of the United States against Cuba.

Addressing students of the prestigious center, members of the diplomatic corps and officials of the Cuban Foreign Ministry, Mogherini asserted that the unilateral U.S. measure -lasting almost six decades- 'worsens the life' of the men, women and children of the Caribbean nation.

The EU head of diplomacy also rejected the attempts of those who try to isolate the Caribbean island applying this kind of policy.

'Unlike those who raise walls and close doors', the EU wants to open them and lay bridges through cooperation and dialogue, stressed the also Vicepresident of the European Commission, here on her third official visit to the greater of the Antilles.

In other issues of her speech, Mogherini approached present and future aspects of the links with the EU; talked about youth, climate change and the preventive work of the Cuban government to minimize the damages of hurri-

cane Irma and praised the work done during the recovery stage.

Referring to the recent Agreement of Political Dialogue and Cooperation (ADPC) between Cuba and the EU, enacted last November, she said it would allow to expand the links to the level really reflecting the historical, economic and cultural bonds

The high EU official toured a center for adolescents in Old Havana, whose historical center she walked together with the city's historian, Eusebio Leal, before her lecture at San Geronimo. Mogherini met on Wednesday with the Cuban Minister of Foreign Trade and Investment, Rodrigo Malmierca and in today's agenda are included talks with Foreign Minister, Bruno Rodríguez.

Her agenda also plans to hold a meeting with Esteban Lazo, President of the People's Power National Assembly (parliament). Bilateral relations between both parts are in good health and develop positively, according to Havana authorities.

The Caribbean country has full diplomatic relations with the 28 member states of the EU, bloc that holds second place in Cuba's trading partners, besides being an important emitter of tourists and investment.

This is Mogherini's third visit to Cuba after the accord between Havana and Brussels which established the mechanisms for political and cooperation dialog that came into effect last November 1st, with provisional character until the Parliaments of the 28 member states of the EU ratifies the agreement.

**"Unlike those who raise walls and close doors', the EU wants to open them and lay bridges through cooperation and dialogue"**



*Federica Mogherini visited on Wednesday the Cuba-Europe Cultural Relations Interpretation Center located in the Segundo Cabo Palace in the colonial section of Old Havana. Accompanied by the City Historian Eusebio Leal, Mogherini toured the installation inaugurated May of last year after completing a restoration process with the support of the EU, UNESCO and Cuban institutions.*



## Martí, art among the arts



*The Coral prizewinning animated film *Los dos príncipes* will premiere in the Yara theater, January 28. Photo: ICAIC*

To a sincere homage to the Apostle José Martí, on the 165th anniversary of his birth, it has convened the Ministry of Culture (Mincult) and its system of institutions in 2018.

Among the activities that will develop the Mincult is the premiere, by the Cuban Institute of Art and Cinematographic Industry (ICAIC), of the Cuban animated film *The Two Princes*, by the filmmakers Adanoe Lima and Yemeli Cruz, at the Yara Cinema, on Sunday January 28. This National audiovisual was Coral Prize at the 39th Festival of New Latin American Cinema in Havana.

For its part, the National Council of Cultural Heritage will held "Marti Evening" on the 26th, at the Museum of Ciego de Ávila On the 28th, at ten o'clock in the morning, in the Provincial museums throughout the country, they will award the contest "Nuestro Martí".

The National Library of Cuba José Martí (BNCJM) will commemorate the date, with a cultural space The Twentieth Anniversary of the Reading Marti National Contest and will present the call for this twentieth edition on January 27 at

11:00 am, at the Theater-room of the prestigious institution.

In addition, from this January 16 on in its central hall gallery-lobby the Bncjm visitor will be able to appreciate the bibliographic exhibition 165 Anniversary of the Birth of José Martí, which includes documents, publications, photos and posters belonging to the patrimonial funds of the Library. The opening will be at 11:00 a.m.

The capital Casa del ALBA announces for Tuesday 23 at 5:00 pm, the opening of an exhibition on Martí and the Cuban flag, by the artist Arián García, and on Saturday 27 at 11:00 am, the presentation of several children's criots. At 6:00 p.m., Polito Ibáñez will offer a concert in homage to the Hero of Dos Ríos.

The National Council of Houses of Culture, as part of the first stage of the national contest Where the palm grows, has organized, from 20 to 28 January, painting exhibitions in educational centers across the country.

## UNESCO Congratulates Cuba for the 59th Anniversary of the Revolution



HAVANA, Cuba, Jan 3 (ACN) UNESCO congratulated the Cuban people for the 59th anniversary of the Revolution and expressed its will to continue strengthening its ties with the Caribbean nation.

According to Prensa Latina News Agency, UNESCO recognized Cuba's traditional active role for the promotion of international cooperation of the entity.

The communique revealed on Wednesday by the permanent representation in Havana highlights of Cuba and UNESCO celebrations of its 70 years of successful ties during 2017.

Multiple activities were carried out that contributed in recognizing the achievement of the Revolution in different sectors of the UN entity.

For example the tribute of prima ballerina assoluta Alicia Alonso, UNESCO's Good Will Ambassador

during the tour of the Cuban National Ballet troupe to France in July of 2017.

Also the recognition of singer/songwriter Silvio Rodríguez, UNESCO's Artist for Peace on the occasion of the inauguration of the Gira por los Barrios (Tours through the Neighborhoods) Photography Exhibition last December at the multi-lateral entity.

Another important event was the celebration of World Jazz Day in Havana in addition to a Cuban cultural week that included the Ofrendas exhibition by artist Silvia Rivero and the special presentation of musician Jose Maria Vitier and the soprano Barbara Llanes at the UNESCO headquarters.



## Thinking of People rather than Diseases



Cuba closed 2017 with an infant mortality rate of 4.1 per thousand live births, the lowest in the history of the sector in the country, as a result of the professionals and managers' intense work of a National Health System that thinks in people more than in diseases.

The member of the Political Bureau and Minister of Public Health, Dr. Roberto Morales Ojeda, spoke about this and other indicators of the health of the Cuban population, at the ceremony held on Thursday in the Camilo Cienfuegos Hall of the Ministry of Public Health, on the occasion of the 59th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution Triumph.

The head of Public Health revealed the highest number of surgical activities in the history of the sector in the country during this 2017, and it is achieved a sustained increase in the number of minimally invasive surgeries techniques with more than 52,000 reported, which represent more than 14 percent of the total elective major surgeries.

The Minister also stressed that the achievement of the highest number in the country of natural products produced and available for the application of natural and traditional medicine are among the satisfactory results.

Three years after, Cuba became the first country certified by the World Health Organization to eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV and congenital syphilis. It is maintained the indicator of zero percent and 0.04 percent per thousand live births, respectively.

Morales Ojeda said that "in a country where 19.8 percent of the population is over 60 years old and life expectancy at birth is 78.45 years, the care for the elderly remains a priority, with lower indicators of mortality of the older adult with more than 60 and 75 years."

"They increased the number of day care homes for elderly to 287 in the country to serve more than 9,900 elderly people, and 150 nursing homes with more than 11,910 beds," he said.

Morales Ojeda also said that the availability of technical aids, including hearing aids, is increasing, and its access is extended to 62 pharmacies throughout the country, in which they can acquire wheelchairs, canes, walkers, Fowler beds, among other resources.

It meant that, 26 new equipment was installed in seven provinces of the country for the diagnosis and treatment of cancer this year, with a cost of over 26 million dollars.

"There are 45 regionalized oncology, 25 nuclear medicine and nine radiotherapy services to guarantee the access to cancer care for the population. The diagnosis in early stages of the cervix, skin and breast cancer has also been praiseworthy, thanks to the use of effective techniques for the detection of this disease".

The Minister confirmed that the country has eliminated poliomyelitis, diphtheria, tetanus in newborn, whooping cough, measles, rubella and mumps. It is shown a decrease in the incidence of bacterial meningitis by seven percent and the viral infection by 21 percent, as well as the number of cases of imported malaria, gonorrhea, genital herpes and condyloma acuminatum.

Morales Ojeda said that 81 percent of people living with HIV in the country receive antiretroviral treatment, a percentage higher than in 2016.

The incidence of confirmed cases of dengue decreases by 68 percent. There have not been reported cases of chikungunya, and at the end of the first half of December, Zika transmission was reported in 18 municipalities of the country, he added.

"This year 145 organ donations have been made, which allowed 454 transplants, of which 198 were kidney", he highlighted.

Besides, he affirmed that the basic table of medicines for 2018 approved 761. "Currently, we are working on the process of changing the medical prescription model and the implementation of new institutional rubber stamp, as well as the process of transformations was approved throughout the pharmacy's business system which strengthen the service of these facilities".

He said that in the last four years, more than 24 300 medical devices have been imported for a cost of over 210 million dollars, for the benefit of all medical specialties and most of the country's health institutions.

The Minister also referred to the Cuban health professionals training of different specialties in 18 countries in advanced technologies and with foreign professors in Cuba, which has allowed to introduce 33 techniques that have benefited more than 1780 patients.

**" Cuba became the first country certified by the World Health Organization to eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV and congenital syphilis."**

In the event, the collective labor agreement was signed between the Ministry of Public Health and the National Union of Health Workers. In addition, the prizes of the Second Edition of the Journalistic Contest Nicolás José Gutiérrez were granted. The prizewinners were: with the Grand Prize Lisandra Fariñas of Granma newspaper; Michel García of Radio Camoa; Milenis Torres of the Cuban Television Informative System; Leyani Graciela Díaz of 5 de septiembre Newspaper; and Alina Iglesias of Radio Enciclopedia under the digital journalism.



## Quality education: a permanent challenge.



The current school period has been characterized by the implementation of the third improvement process in General Education and the total integration of universities.

These days the farewell to the old year and the arrival of another summon to the review of some of the most significant stages and moments of a school period characterized by the implementation of the Third Improvement Process in General Education and the total integration of universities.

In this brief look it is also worth mentioning that Hurricane Irma – which affected the country a few days after the start of the school year– damaged a large number of the centers' infrastructure. In general education it affected 2,264 schools (of the more than 60,000 that exist) alone, and so far 78 percent of them has been recovered.

This situation caused that around 510 educational institutions to become evacuation centers, in which more than 50,000 people were assisted by pedagogical groups, executives, teachers and service workers, who stayed there before and after the passage of the devastating hurricane.

It is feasible to mention that even when 2017 ends, this is not the case with the school year, since it does not coincide with the fiscal year. However, from September to date, the country has celebrated dates of great historical signi-

ficance, such as the first anniversary of the physical disappearance of Commander in Chief Fidel Castro Ruz (November), and the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Che, in Bolivia (October).

Hence the permanent call upon the study of the thought of these two great men of the country's history.

Third improvement process: A medium-and-long-term task

The extension of the improvement process of the national educational system –which is being experimented in 68 centers of six provinces of the different educational levels three years ago – is nowadays a reality in 152 institutions of the country.

According to Silvia Navarro Quintero, director of the Central Institute of Pedagogical Sciences, the experience is carried out (in a staggered way) in 1st, 4th, 7th and 10th, that is, in the initial grades of each educational level, so that in three courses the entire education system will have been incorporated, including Early Childhood (previously preschool), and Technical and Professional Education, Special Education and Adult Education.

She said, "The improvement itself is worth it," especially in terms of updating textbooks, content, in terms of contextualizing what the child, adolescent, young people must learn in line with the transformations and social economic development.

Likewise, it is in line with the social demands and with the model of society needed today from the Guidelines of the Economic, Political and Social Policy of the Party and the Objectives of its

First Conference.

Along with this task, the Ministry of Education also has among its priorities the training and qualification of the teaching staff, so last September two other pedagogical schools joined the existing 24, which have graduated more than 14,000 young people.

The head of the sector stressed, on more than one occasion, the importance of addressing this issue, because today around 18 percent of the teaching force that is in the classrooms does not have university titles.

If we manage that by 2020 –she said– a good part of these young people leave Higher Education centers, then we can count on more than 90 percent of our professors with university level, which will contribute to the quality of the teaching-educational process.

On the other hand, technical and professional education (ETP Spanish acronym) is constantly growing in order to meet the demand for skilled labor in all sectors of society, including the non-state sector of the economy.

Alexander Manso –department head of the ETP– said that today this education includes 103 specialties, 54 in the medium-technician category and 49 of qualified workers, and exhibits a cycle retention of 81.6 percent. This means that every 100 students only a bit more than 81 managed to graduate.

Rationality in resources and work force Integration has characterized the work of Higher Education in recent years. In September, Cuban universities began the school year with this process concluded.

Of 69 centers and more than 200 faculties that existed, today these figures have been reduced to 50 and 160, respectively. Likewise, of the 12 Bodies of the Central Administration of the State (OACE Spanish acronym) that had affiliated Higher Education institutions, they are only seven now.

**"By 2020 more than 90 percent of our professors will have university level"**



## Teaching everyone, everywhere



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revolution, who said, "Teach everyone everything they can be taught. All of them and each one!"

Dr. Marlen Triana Mederos, national director of the sub-system, said, "Special Education in Cuba is based on the same principles as general education," and referred to the transformations in which she is immersed, noting, "Today special education is redefining its role, working to provide attention to girls, boys, and adolescents with special educational needs, in whatever context they may find themselves."

Attending a special education center is not obligatory, even if parents recognize their value and consider them ideal, Mederos explained, emphasizing the "essentially transitory" nature of these schools, since the fundamental goal is inclusion.

In terms of this principle, plus those of equality and equity - key values for special education in Cuba - the figures available are revealing, but even more so is the evidence provided by the daily work of teachers, educational psychologists, and speech therapists; the progress of students in regular and special schools; the material resources at their disposal; and in the opportunity to graduate and become employed.

As a result of early detection and attention to special educational needs, Dr. Mederos explains, the number of students enrolled in the program has declined over the last few years, (See graph) with specialists at Diagnostic and Orientation Centers in every municipality playing a key role.

What has been accomplished here has also been possible in other parts of the world, thanks to Cuba's commitment to sharing knowledge. At this time, for example, the country is providing professional assistance to member countries of the Caribbean Community, CARICOM, in the establishment of a disability center.

Here are just some examples of what can be done when everyone together struggles for the dreams of some. Many challenges remain in eliminating physical barriers, as well as teacher staffing and training, recognizes Mederos. Nevertheless the desire persists to coax a smile from someone like Angélica, who has learned to challenge our imaginations.

They say that looking into Angelica's eyes has a moving effect. They say her timid words are flights of imagination.

Although a degenerative disease has prevented her from returning to school, her ambulatory teacher, family, and friends are those who now make her smile in a home classroom constructed especially for her.

For those in charge of her learning, her progress is a matter of pride, as it is for Cuba's special education system with an eloquent history of creating opportunities and access for all, in accordance with its humanist principles, since the Special Education Department was established in 1962.

Thus began a period of updating and transformation for this area of education, with the goal of being in step with the times. A central conviction guided the process, expressed by its principle architect, the leader of the Cuban Re-



Dr. Marlen Triana Mederos, national director for special education.

Photo: ACN

### MAJOR PROJECTIONS FOR IMPROVING SPECIAL EDUCATION

- Elaboration of methodological guides to address special educational needs at different levels and in accordance with each disability
- Supporting the leading role of teachers in making adjustments to the general curriculum, as part of an experiment in 18 schools for students with intellectual disabilities and one for hearing impaired students
- Experimenting with specific academic subjects in terms of each disability and the needs of each student
- Translating each grade's new texts and workbooks to Braille, to serve the visually impaired
- Support work with families, extending such efforts beyond the parents to other relatives
- Enlisting families to play a leading role in preparation of the student's curriculum
- A new conception of vocational training, considering the level of development of students' work abilities
- Establishing a project to support students with behavioral issues



## Every word a concept, an idea



The classic Cuban novel *Cecilia Valdés* was the inspiration behind a zarzuela of the same name. Photo: Yander Zamora

The first time I read “Every word an idea,” the poster of the Concept of Revolution, expressed by Comandante en Jefe Fidel Castro, the first word that struck me was “modesty”. I thought back to a time as long ago as 1955 when, as everyone would agree, Fidel was already considered to be a knowledgeable man. Upon graduating from the Belén school, the lofty praise of the Jesuit priests left no doubt that he was, and would later become even more so.

By 1955, the young lawyer had already given his indisputably rich and eloquent self defense speech known as History Will Absolve Me.

However, the word “modesty” made me think back to a passage from a letter or document, I can’t remember exactly which, Haydée Santamaría gave to me to read in May, 1955. “Read this passage by Fidel, you’re going to like it.” It was just a

section that could have been from some document about his plans, a letter to a friend or to Haydée and Melba about their revolutionary plans, which, logically, were of the utmost discretion. I read the passage marked. I was at Melba’s parents’ house on Jovellar Street, where after the two women were released from Guanajay prison, they had set up an office to receive everything sent by Fidel while he was in prison on the Isle of Youth, following the Moncada attack.

I took the piece of paper, which was folded to show just the passage and dated May 19. I read in Fidel’s handwriting: “I’m obsessed with **Cecilia Valdés** by Villaverde. It hadn’t interested me for years but now I’m in a hurry to read it. I have lived happy days, enthralled, oblivious to everything, practically transported to the last century, in the pages of this formidable history of Cuba. “For quite some time now I have wanted to know more about our past, our population, and the people of yesterday. My enthusiasm, interest, and passion in everything I’m reading about helps me. This time I want to talk about the work of the person who superbly painted that period, some aspects of which are still alive in the Cuban mentality, above all in regards to that interesting problem of slavery, because I’m realizing that it is the cause of a great part of the enormous confusion and vacillations which characterized Cuban political thought through 1868.

“When it comes down to it, reading a novel is a method I like because it allows me to take a rest from study while redoubling my interest. I often feel a little tempted to break into the field of fiction; although luckily, history occupies me, and even more so, when it’s in this form, when it’s not just political, economic, socio-cultural history, but the broadest and deepest history you could ask for. “I commemorated December 7 by reading, full of profound veneration, Maceo’s letters and documents in the volume I have from the Cuban Society of Historic Studies. Days earlier I spent charming moments with Zweig’s biography, indisputably superior to that of Rourke. So that’s how the days go by, quite easily in fact.”

What modesty and interest in history!

Further down, almost at the end of the now historic concept of Revolution according to Fidel, I read: “Fighting for our dreams of justice for Cuba and for the world, which is the foundation of our patriotism, our socialism and our internationalism.” I was struck by more than just a word, and just like that, I began to recall more of Fidel’s remarks. It was almost like I was hearing him speak, just like I had during the Moncada trial when he referred to revolutionary program led by the July 26 movement, and which would soon become a strategic victory and definitive triumph of the Revolution.

At that time (1953) he said “We also declare that Cuba’s policy in Latin America will be one of close solidarity with the peoples of the continent and those politically persecuted by bloody tyrannies...”

Thus just like Martí, whom Fidel proclaimed as the intellectual author of the Moncada assault, every word, speech, or concept, outlined in brief passages by Fidel, is an eternal expression of his sense of the historic moment.

**Note:** After the triumph of the Revolution, documents and letters written by Fidel from his cell on the Isle of Youth were published; including that referencing Villaverde’s novel.

## Cuba Recommended as the Tourism Destination to Visit in 2018



HAVANA, Cuba, Dec 29 (acn) Cuba was recommended by the German magazine Rough Guides as among the 18th world tourism destination to visit in 2018.

The publication placed the Caribbean island in 6th place in its list considering the country an attractive option in the tourism industry despite the measures imposed by the US government.

According to Prensa Latina News Agency, Rough Guides in an over a minute video highlighted the western province of Pinar del Rio with sites like Vinales, which is a great attraction for nature lovers.

Havana is highlighted by its heritage values; the Bellamar Caves and Varadero in Matanzas; as well as Trinidad in the center and

eastern cities of Camaguey and Baracoa are among the places that are proposed by the specialized tourism magazine.

Newcastle, in Britain heads the list followed by the Civil Rights Track in the US, Malawi, Malta, Wales, Cuba, Russia, New Orleans, Chile, Sierra Leon, South Korea, Jordan, Tiflis (Georgia), South Africa, Palermo (Italy), Indonesia, Tunisia and Belize.

## Top priority given to building Varadero International Hotel



Cuban constructors prioritize today the project of Varadero's Hotel Internacional (some 140 kilometers east of Havana), with which 940 rooms will be added to capacities of this resort.

The project, in finishing stage - process that should end by December this year- is erected in a more distant area away from the dune, but with exceptional beach conditions,

declared to the Cuban News Agency (ACN), Roberto Rovira, director of the enterprise Construcción y Montaje de Obras del Turismo Hicacos.

Rovira highlighted the architectonic elements of the previous emblematic hotel of the same name built in the 50s of last century,

Written by PL Published in CubaSi

demolished to be adapted to present standard requirements.

The Varadero resort, main sun-beach destination of the island, received in 2017 a record figure of one million 700 thousand foreign visitors, informed recently the Ministry of Tourism (Mintur).

For the tenth year in a row, the locality received over a million foreign tourists and holds the growth rhythm of national tourism which is among the first emitting sources. Canada kept its leadership as main vacation market, while Germany consolidates its presence and countries such as Russia, Spain and France stand out for high growth rates of clients, said the source.

Varadero has consolidated as tourist destination with a favorable balance in its performance despite the impact of powerful hurricane Irma, with totally recovered facilities, highlighted Mintur. 'With the opening of Iberostar Bella Vista exploited by hotel group Gaviota, in association with Iberostar, the total capacity of the resort has 21 thousand 388 rooms, over 80 percent of them concentrated in high-standard accommodations', he detailed.

The note of Mintur detailed that transparency of the waters, the white sands, as well as the combinations of blue in its waters and the very light submarine slope make of Varadero beach the most attractive, said the note.



## A growing sector that sustains development



THROUGH the month of November, Cuba received 4,257,754 international visitors this year, reflecting growth of 19.7%, as compared to the same period in 2016. What is surprising is that this occurred within a context plagued by adversities. Along with the damage caused to hotels and associated facilities by Hurricane Irma, the country's principal emissary market, Canada, did not provide expected levels of income, given the weakening of its currency on the international market.

Nonetheless, Minister of Tourism Manuel Marrero Cruz reported, in a discussion with the National Assembly of People's Power's Services Commission this past December 19-20, that reaching 17,230,650 tourist-days reflects the implementation of strategies such as pro-

moting the circuit tour modality and trips organized around events; new flights during high season; and additional activities for cruise ship visitors, who numbered more than 397,500, he said.

Likewise noted was that the perception of the relation between quality and price - often controversial - has improved. While in the past the rate was not as positive as hoped, it reached a level of acceptance of 90.9% in 2017, and the majority of tourists said they would recommend Cuba to friends and family, and would like to return themselves in coming months.

Marrero also reported that investment projections for the year were completed at a level of only 78.1%, primarily as a result of continuing difficulties related to poor preparation of works and delays in the arrival of materials and motor equipment.

In terms of this last item, Marrero Cruz explained that the sector did not receive the number of rental cars planned, a situation which should improve this year as the 9,000 projected in the plan are imported.

He commented that also affecting visitors' satisfaction were poor road signage, difficulties in exchanging currency, and lack of hygiene in cities. These issues are being reviewed by a government commission and some proposals have been made, such as increasing the number of automatic tellers, and working on the sanitary situation with municipal and provincial authorities, the Minister said.

### HURRICANE RECOVERY

While material damage to hotel facilities in the provinces of Sancti Spíritus, Camagüey, Las Tunas, Holguín, Matanzas, and La Habana was not serious, the situation was very different for beach resorts on the barrier islands of Cayo Coco, Guillermo and Santa María, where some 10,625 tourists were evacuated.

Marrero indicated that the most extensive damage was to landscaping, roofing, ceilings, glass windows, and aluminum trim. How were repairs completed so rapidly? Because, he explained, we had the workforce, the materials, and the financing needed on hand to confront the situation. All the installations were insured, he continued, allowing us to cover the costs, plus the speed with which power and water supplies were restored helped a great deal.

As a result of the combined effort, operations and services were reinitiated on the northern keys November 1, he reported, adding, "We can even say that the country's beaches are in better condition than before."

In addition to the damage caused by the hurricane, the numbers of tourists visiting fell during the months of September, November, and December, as a result of the perception among travelers that "everything was in bad shape and that there was no way Cuba could recover before the high season," Marrero reported.

Despite the adversities, he emphasized, we never gave up on reaching 4,700,000 visitors, that would represent surpassing projections by 11.9 %.

### MAKING TOURISM SUSTAINABLE

In accordance with the plan of measures approved this year by the Council of Ministers to confront climate change, another area of the Ministry's work is directed toward making tourism sustainable, and aligned with projections for 2050 and 2100, Marrero said.

**"In the days prior to Hurricane Irma, 88.5% of the tourists in Cuba were staying in hotels along the country's northern coastline, precisely where the eye of the storm made landfall"**



Regulations have been established including laws governing land use on the coastline and provinces are linked to the overall task of adapting to climate change outlined in the approved Tarea Vida (Task Life), including demolishing buildings constructed directly on the beach which have a negative impact on dunes.

"Restoring heritage sites is also an effort underway, so those structures that have been abandoned, or that are in poor condition, can be converted into small hotels, and preserve their historical, architectural value," Marrero said.

As part of the environmental strategy, the Minister noted that being developed are nature, adventure, and rural tourism, while other projects have been undertaken, for example, to make use of food waste and increase energy efficiency with the installation of solar water heaters and LED lighting, in addition to the construction of plants to desalinize sea water. In regards to this issue, Marilyn Rodríguez, deputy from the municipality of Cárdenas, in Matanzas, commented that Hurricane Irma was a learning experience for local People's Power zones, and heightened consciousness of the importance of the State Plan on Climate Change, and the need to relocate facilities and dwelling close to the coastline.



Hotel Ocean Vista Azul Varadero by H10 Hotels

### FOREIGN INVESTMENT IN CUBAN TOURISM

- 19 international hotel chains are operating on the island
- 87 administration contracts
- 42,275 rooms were built with foreign capital (62.2% of the total)
- 27 joint ventures

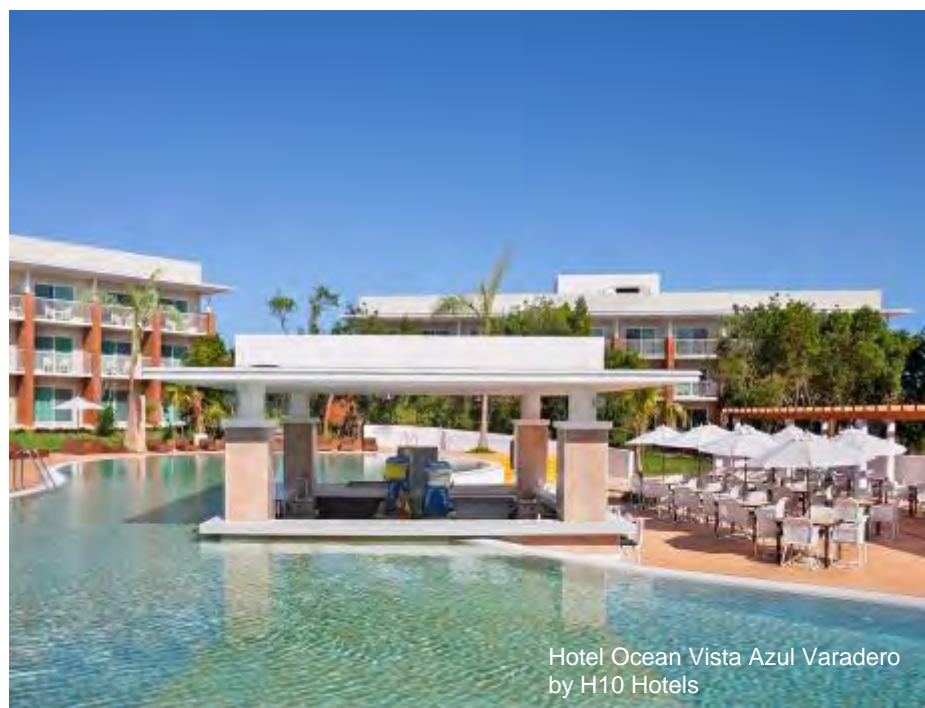
### NON-STATE MANAGEMENT IN TOURISM

- 24,217 rooms in private homes (in the majority of cities, such rooms out-number those offered in hotels)
- Travel agencies have contracts with 2,585 self-employed workers, primarily in private Bed & Breakfast accommodations, restaurants and transportation
- Several Central Organizations of Enterprise Management (OSDE) have signed 3,262 contracts with self-employed workers, primarily in the areas of construction and maintenance
- 19 non-agricultural cooperatives linked to the sector

### PRINCIPLE MARKETS

- Canada, with 23% of the total number of tourist arriving to the island
- Some 1,250,521 U.S. citizens and Cubans resident in this country traveled to the island
- The Russian market surpassed its previous record number of annual visitors in August 2017, increasing by 68%

The traditional markets showing the most growth were France, Italy, Russia, Spain, Argentina and Brazil



Hotel Ocean Vista Azul Varadero  
by H10 Hotels

*With a cliff-top location and stunning sea views, the Ocean Vista Azul is a new five-star resort, surrounded by two idyllic beaches and crystal-clear waters. The hotel offers a spectacular infinity pool, bright, spacious rooms, themed restaurants, the Despacio Beauty Centre and the Privilege service with Exclusive Rooms and Services. The hotel also has a full programme of family entertainment.*