

---

**France and Cuba See Favorable Context to Strengthen Relations**

25/01/2016



Cuban and French authorities stressed the existence of a highly favorable context to strengthen bilateral relations. "We are in a historical moment for the relations between the countries", said Matthias Fekl, State Minister for Foreign Trade, the Promotion of Tourism and French Nationals Abroad, while addressing the annual gala dinner of the Cuban Cooperation Association.

"A new era is beginning, partly due to the diplomatic evolution between Cuba and the United States and also due to the long friendship between our countries", he said.

He added that French companies are present in many sectors of the country, including tourism, construction and energy.

Jean Pierre Bel, personal adviser for the President of France on Latin American and Caribbean Affairs, stressed the visit to Havana of President François Hollande last May and the one President Raul Castro will soon pay in Paris.

He also highlighted the bravery of the Cuban people "that has remained true to itself" and at the same time wants to open to the world, as it faces the blockade imposed by the United States and the European Union's common position on Cuba, which is absurd and a unjust.

Meanwhile, Ricardo Cabrisas, Cuban vice-president of the Council of Ministers, referred to the existing possibilities for a strengthening of economic, commercial and financial relations between the countries.

"Cuba is undergoing an important moment. We are updating our economic and social model within our socialist system. That entails significant changes in our economy", he said.

France has the opportunity to participate in this process to project our long-term social and economic development,

Cabrisas added.

---