

Cuba-Bolivia Cooperation Agreement

In a message to Evo Morales from the National Assembly and the Council of State, the people of Cuba recognized that both he and his people, one of the poorest and most exploited in the hemisphere, are facing new and enormous challenges which call for the greatest possible solidarity from both Latin American and the world.

During the talks, the Cuban Government expressed its willingness to promote a program enabling the provision of ophthalmic treatment to the five million poor patients in Latin America and the Caribbean estimated to need eye surgery every year.

Cuba also indicated its readiness to start immediate cooperation with the efforts of the new president aimed at eradicating illiteracy among all his compatriots.

For his part, Evo Morales, Bolivia's President Elect by an overwhelming majority, expressed his determination to address the poverty and exploitation of that combative people.

Both nations are resolved to fight for the unity and integration of the brotherly peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean and for peace and friendship among all peoples of the world. As steps preparatory to the taking of office by President Elect Evo Morales, whose term will commence as soon as the Bolivian leader assumes the presidency of his nation, and the legal and constitutional powers that come with it, the two countries have agreed on immediate cooperative measures for further implementation after January 22, 2006, as follows:

1: To establish a non-profit Cuban-Bolivian entity with the mission of providing high-quality ophthalmic surgery free of charge to all Bolivian citizens unable to afford the extremely high fees associated with such services, thereby avoiding a situation in which every year tens of thousands of poor Bolivians could lose their eyesight or suffer serious and often incapacitating impairment of their vision.

2: Cuba will provide leading-edge technology equipment together with the ophthalmologists needed for the initial stage; these specialists, supported by young Bolivian doctors trained at the Latin American School of Medical Sciences (ELAM) as residents, or other residents and doctors from Bolivia other countries, will provide care of the highest quality to the Bolivian patients.

3: Cuba will pay the salaries of these specialists.

4: Bolivia will provide the facilities required for these services, which may be premises already in use for medical purposes or adapted for such.

5: The National Ophthalmology Institute, recently equipped by Cuba for eye surgery and staffed partly by Cuba with ELAM-graduate Bolivian specialists and residents, who have already performed surgery on 1,536 Bolivians, will have two additional surgical facilities, in Cochabamba and Santa Cruz respectively. The La Paz Ophthalmology Center will have a capacity of 100 operations daily, while the Cochabamba and Santa Cruz clinics will each handle half that number. These facilities combined will be able to perform eye surgery on at least 50,000 people annually. This overall capacity may be increased should Bolivia decide to offer ophthalmologic services to poor patients in neighboring countries near the Bolivian centers.

6: Cuba offers Bolivia 5,000 full scholarships for training doctors and specialists in comprehensive general medicine and other medical disciplines: 2,000 during the first quarter of 2006, who are already

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undergoing basic preparation in Cuba; 2000 in the second half of the year, and 1,000 in the first quarter of 2007. In later years, the quotas thus established will be filled by new candidates. The numbers mentioned do not include the 497 Bolivian youths already studying medicine at medical science faculties in Cuba.

7: Cuba will provide Bolivia with the know-how, teaching materials and technical facilities needed for a literacy program covering the entire relevant population. The two nations will work together to complete the program within 30 months, beginning July 2006.

8: Cuba will provide Bolivia with details of the experience with its energy-saving program.

9: Cuba will provide its full support for the development of sports in Bolivia, in those disciplines of interest to its people.

10: The parties will seek ways to maximize academic, scientific and cultural exchanges between the Bolivian and Cuban peoples.

11: Other forms of beneficial, useful and constructive cooperation between the two countries will be considered.

These programs will procure and accept international cooperation, although the two countries undertake to implement them with their own resources.

This agreement is the initial stage of a wide-ranging process of integration based on the principles of solidarity and reciprocity.

Fidel Castro Ruz
President of the Council of State
and of the Council of Ministers
of Cuba

Evo Morales
President Elect of Bolivia

Source:

Author:

- [Castro Ruz, Fidel](#)
- [Morales Ayma, Evo](#)

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