

## [A year later, the 7th Party Congress continues](#)



A year ago, the undefeated Comandante en Jefe of the **Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro Ruz**, left us a testament and a political duty: “working with fervor and dignity, can produce the material and cultural wealth that humans need, and we must fight relentlessly to obtain these.”

Fidel immediately followed this by expressing to the peoples of the world, just as José Martí spoke of the importance of Cuban independence, on May 18, 1895: “To our brothers in **Latin America** and the world we must convey that the Cuban people will overcome.”

Today, we are also celebrating 56 years since the victory on the sands of **Playa Girón** against imperialist aggression and in defense of our **socialist Revolution**, with Fidel leading the action in the theater of operations.

On April 19, 2016, Army General **Raúl Castro Ruz** closed the 7th Party Congress stating: “I believe it is appropriate to recall that the process of updating our economic model, which we initiated at the 6th Congress, is not a task of one or two five-year periods. The course has been charted,” Raúl stated then, recalling that the next five years would be decisive “to guaranteeing the gradual, well-ordered transfer of the principal responsibility for the country to younger generations, a process of special importance which we hope to carry out and conclude with the holding of the 8th Congress in 2021.”

The first 12 months of those five years demonstrate the motives for defending our socialism.

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At the end of 2015, given financial constraints due to the decline in the prices of Cuba's principal exports and the effects on cooperative relations with other countries, a complex economic situation loomed. In July of last year, Raúl reported the decline of fuel supplies and the worsening of financial tensions, which led to a decrease of 0.9% in the island's Gross Domestic Product.

However, Cubans, under the leadership of our Party and the protections offered by our socialist system, have continued to enjoy free social services - education and health for the entire population - there has been no return to the blackouts of the early 1990s, and the process of updating our economic model has continued. All this in the context of the same cruel and illegal U.S. economic, commercial and financial blockade, which has not diminished at all, and continues to prevent Cuba from carrying out international transactions in U.S. dollars, which thwarts the advance of many important and prospective business ventures.

As if that were not enough, after the 7th Party Congress, on October 4-5, 2016, a powerful and destructive hurricane, named Matthew, hit the eastern region of the island, causing extensive damages. But thanks to our socialist system, irreversible according to the Constitution and endorsed in each document and word spoken at the 7th Congress, we did not have to mourn the loss of a single human life. In addition, the socialist state - it is good to repeat this because only a socialist state is capable of such feats - decided to subsidize the prices of construction materials for those people whose homes had been totally or partially destroyed by 50%; granted the possibility of loans with lower interest rates and longer terms, and assumed the payment of interest in cases of total destruction of homes and roofs.

In the immediate aftermath of the 7th Congress, on April 22, May 3, 17 and 24, 2016, measures to gradually increase the purchasing power of the Cuban peso came into force. These were followed by the updating of 17 self-employment activities formerly taxed according to the general regime and moved to the simplified tax regime. Shortly before the Congress, Resolution 6 was announced to modify wage payment systems according to results applied in the Cuban enterprise system; while a measure was adopted to permit the direct wholesale of industrial gases to self-employed persons working in the auto-body repair, blacksmith and oxyacetylene cutting sectors, at the Industrial Gas Company's territorial units.

As is known, by mandate of the 7th Congress, the historic and core documents presented at this gathering - the Conceptualization of the Cuban Economic and Social Model and the National Economic and Social Development Plan through 2030 - were put to an intense and democratic debate within the Party and youth organizations, and among representatives of mass organizations and broad sectors of society.

On July 26, 2016, during his closing remarks to commemorate National Rebellion Day, Party Central Committee Second Secretary, José Ramón Machado Ventura, noted that up until mid-June, a total of 704,643 compatriots had participated in this debate, making 359,648 interventions, including 95,482 proposals aimed, almost without exception, at enriching and further defining these documents.

Although high expectations have resulted in increasing impatience to know the results of this process, it is advancing as planned by the Party Congress. It should not be forgotten that on Tuesday, December 27, 2016, at the close of the eighth period of ordinary sessions of the Eighth Legislature of the National Assembly of People's Power, held at the Havana International Conference Center, compañero Raúl stated: "We hope that during the course of the first half of this coming year, the Central Committee Plenum will approve both programmatic documents."

That is to say, a year later, the 7th Party Congress continues.

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