Promoting Biodiversity in the Fight Against Climate Change

New Cuban Film Celebrates Feminine Friendships

Havana’s Agribusiness Fair Keeps Expanding

China Increases Investment in Latin America and the Caribbean
Havana, Cuba - The 20th Habano Festival once again proved that Cuba's tobacco industry has untapped potential for the commercialization of its most exclusive products.

Tour operators report that it ranks among Cuba's principal congress or convention tourism attractions.

Quality Cuban hand-rolled cigars -- or Premium cigars as they are also known -- have always been held in very high regard on the lucrative international cigar market.

The annual Habano Festival, at the beginning of every year, celebrates their quality and renown.

Held this year between February 26th and March 2nd at the Havana Convention Center, the Festival was deemed by collectors to have included important new products and by all participants to have been a thoroughly enjoyable experience.

Quality remains a key feature of this festival for both organizers and participants.

This year, two thousand sector specialists and cigar lovers from 70 countries took part in what was a spectacular success for the Habanos S.A. international company, discerning cigar smokers and those in attendance for business reasons.

The auction of seven special lots of humidors containing limited edition Cuban Premium cigars raised 1,495,000 Euros during a lavish closing ceremony at Havana's Pabexpo Showground.

El Rey del Mundo, H.Upmann, Hoyo de Monterrey, Romeo y Julieta, Partagás and Montecristo branded humidors were put up for auction alongside the most cherished of Cohiba humidors, which fetched 340 thousand Euros.

The Festival was dedicated to the emblematic Cohiba and Partagás brands and Cigar of the Year awards granted during the festival went to Cuba's own Viginio Morales, in the Production category, to the Austrian Ercan Hazar in the Business category, and Italian Franchesco Minetti, in the Communications category.

The auctioned lots were true works of art created from cedar wood, other precious materials and as usual, funds raised at the auction were donated to Cuba's renowned free and universal public health system.

Cigar contests, debates and tastings are another integral part of the Habano Festival experience.

In this the 17th edition, the British specialist Darius Namdar -- who was under pressure until the very last minute from Cuba's Mabel Durán -- won the Habanos Sommelier contest with a world class demonstration of his cigar, drink and food tasting skills.

The Cypriot duo Raffi Der Garapetian and Alexis Tselepis won the Festival's Habanos World Challenger award.

This was the first year that the international festival availed of information technologies to evaluate the proficiency of cigar amateurs in cyber-space, with winners facing each other in person for the coveted first place prize here during Havana's famous cigar-fest.
HAVANA.—More than 7 million Cubans exercised their right to vote in General Elections here on March 11th last, during the second and final stage of the 2017-2018 democratic electoral process.

On polling or ‘Por Cuba’ (For Cuba) day— as it is popularly known — discipline, organization and transparency were the hallmarks of both the authorities responsible for the administration of the elections and the very high percentage of citizens who voluntarily participated.

Cuba’s unique electoral system is widely renowned for its transparency and freedom from campaigns during which candidates feel obliged to make promises that can never be fulfilled.

The electorate chose their 605 National Assembly (Parliament) members and 1,265 Provincial Assembly delegates. By late last year 168 People’s Power Municipal Assemblies had been voted in.

The new Parliament’s general composition will come as no surprise and is in keeping with what electoral authorities had forecast during countless public appearances by 287—or 47.4 percent—of candidates for the Legislative Body who had already been elected to Municipal Councils.

These same sources explained that when selecting candidates they ensured that every municipality in the country would be represented by at least two members—one being a municipal delegate—to ensure that no locality is without representation at the State’s supreme legislative body.

Other interesting data on the 9th Legislature to be set up in less than a month is that 55.8 percent of the members of the 8th Legislature will be new.

Some 338 of the candidates were proposed for the first time to assume the responsibility of serving and defending the interests of their constituents and 148 of the 267 sitting legislators (more than 50 percent) had served only one mandate. Eighty (13.2 percent) are between 18 and 35 years of age and 89.25 percent were born after January 1st, 1959, giving an average age of 49.

Moreover, 53 percent of Cuba’s Parliament members are women.

In general elections, summoned every five years, members of the People’s Power National Assembly, its President, Vice-President and Secretary are elected.

The first vice-president, vice-presidents, secretary and other members of the Council of State are also elected during this stage as are delegates to the nation’s provincial and municipal assemblies.

Partial elections are summoned every two and a half years, to elect delegates to the People’s Power Municipal Assemblies and their presidents and vice-presidents.

The Cuban electoral system, characterized by a democratic essence, grants the right to participate in the State’s management—either directly or through their representatives—to all citizens deemed capable.

Consequently, the National Parliament is made up of men and women from all sectors and strata of society: former guerrillas, doctors, workers, engineers and the self-employed, all united by a commitment to their homeland; their vocation to serve others and their personal merits.

Cubans have participated in partial and general elections since their introduction in 1976 and historically there has been an impressive average turnout.
Legislators and Public Agree on Cuba Policy

By Roberto García

HAVANA.- A recent visit by a U.S. congressional delegation to Havana provided further proof that the U.S. public support the normalization of relations between the two countries.

Led by the Senate Appropriations Committee Vice Chairman Patrick Leahy, the group was in Havana from February 17th to 21st, to review with Cuba's authorities changes in U.S. policy on Cuba since Donald Trump took office in January 2017.

At a press conference in the U.S. embassy in Havana, Leahy referred to his group's meeting with Cuban President Raúl Castro.

He described the atmosphere as open and very pleasant and said that the meeting had once again established the Cuban side's willingness to work on the improvement of bilateral relations, despite the present circumstances.

The Vermont senator also clarified that a majority of U.S. citizens support the improvement of relations with Cuba and explained that there is ample support within Congress for the lifting of the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by Washington on Cuba for more than 50 years.

In this context, Leahy described the course taken by Trump on Cuba as flawed, referring specifically to the reduction of diplomatic staff in Havana and the dismissal of Cuban diplomatic staff from Washington.

He described the measure, that had exploited alleged health related incidents reported by U.S. diplomats in Havana as a pretext, as harmful to the interests of both governments and those people who need to travel for family or business reasons.

Referring to the alleged incidents, the senator also highlighted the Cuban government’s cooperation with investigations and stated that Cuba has no desire whatsoever to hurt U.S. nationals in Havana.

Leahy pointed out that neither he nor any member of his delegation was at all afraid of coming, because they know Cuba to be very safe.

They had traveled with their wives and Leahy also brought his 13-year-old granddaughter along.

His delegation included Senators Ron Wyden (Oregon) and Gary Peters (Michigan), the representatives for Florida Kathy Castor, Massachusetts, Jim McGovern, and California, Susan Davis.

McGovern also lamented the reduction of diplomatic staff in both countries and other changes imposed by the White House on bilateral relations, because of their adverse effects on travel in both directions.

He said that in the context of current transformations underway in Cuba and the prospects for enhanced mutual ties, it is counterproductive that the U.S. embassy lacks the personnel needed to function at this time.

McGovern once again called on U.S Secretary of State Rex Tillerson to eliminate all regulations that harm relations with Cuba.

The Massachusetts legislator also referred to contacts with large sectors of Cuban society including the owners of small private businesses, who also support the normalization of bilateral ties.

These and other legislators opposed to the new anti-Cuban policy encouraged by the U.S. ultra-right, share the views of the majority of U.S. citizens.

Recent polls reveal that more than 70 percent the US public favor the elimination of economic sanctions against Cuba and over 80 percent support the removal of the Cuba travel ban.
HAVANA.- Scientists in Cuba are currently working on two new reports for presentation at the United Nations in 2020 on progress in the struggle against the adverse effects of climate change and the protection of biodiversity.

The Third National Communication Program, which focuses on work the island has undertaken to mitigate against its potentially devastating impact on the environment, will be presented at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) at the end of this decade.

The UN Convention covers three areas, the others being Biodiversity and another Desertification.

Cuba ratified the convention 25 years ago, after the 'Rio' or 'Earth Summit,' where Cuba's Revolutionary leader, Fidel Castro, warned about risks to survival on the planet from global warming and the disproportionate emission of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere and cautioned prophetically that the human species "is in danger of extinction."

Eduardo Planos, head of a team responsible for collection of updated information on the effects of greenhouse gas emissions, told The Havana Reporter that the report to be presented at the UN forms part of Cuba's comprehensive commitment to confront the global phenomenon.

Measures taken to mitigate climate change are outlined in the report, as are those related to education, public awareness and the transfer of technology.

Cuba, vulnerable due to its geographical location, has identified the principal threats it faces as an increase in air temperatures, rising average sea levels, increasingly frequent and extreme hydro-meteorological events and declining rates of precipitation.

The country is consequently introducing responsive measures that take account of socio-economic factors, natural resources and strategic ecosystems relating to climate, water and sea resources, as well as to agriculture, settled areas, the exploitation of land, biodiversity and health.

Cuba will also present a report on the protection of flora and fauna -- its sixth within the framework of the Biological Diversity Agreement -- that demonstrates progress in the attainment of its national goals.

According to the Science Technology and Environment Ministry's Ecology Institute, the island has made advances in areas such as reforestation, a task overseen by the National Botanical Garden.

Progress can also be reported on the conservation of mangrove swamps and on invasive exotic species and there have been very significant advances on the recovery of the endangered autochthonous crocodile.

Valuable experience has been gained in the management of invasive exotic species and a national program is already in place to control the proliferation of varieties of non-endemic foreign flora and fauna.

Edith Felipe, the Coordinator of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), highlighted Cuba's commitment to the preservation of its biodiversity, noting that important measures have been implemented and that work is underway on approaches to ecosystem management.

When interviewed by The Havana Reporter, she explained that works undertaken in diverse areas combine to ensure a cohesive adaptation to climate change. There are many such terrestrial and marine based examples on the island, including ecosystem conservation projects in the protected Sabana-Camagüey.

Felipe also referred to conservation works conducted on Cuba's south-western coastline, where mangrove reforestation offers protection from rising sea level in vulnerable areas.
HAVANA. - La Gloria, a town located north of Camagüey city in the Cubitas mountain range, was hidden until recently under the same veil of geographic oblivion that covers a multitude of other such remote and rural Cuban settlements.

La Gloria; however, has its own particular historic claim to a fame that forms part of the nation’s identity and it becomes so much more than another typical town, when light is shed on its unique and special origins.

Unlike most Cuban towns established by the Spanish, La Gloria was founded by U.S. citizens who unknowingly arrived in pursuit of an ill-founded dream at the start of the last century.

In 1900, two years after the end of the Spanish-Cuban-American War, the Cuba Land and Steamship Company of New York sold a plot of land in a non-existent town north of Camagüey city – describing it as a virtual Garden of Eden.

Enticed by wonder filled illusions, more than 200 settlers from the US arrived in the area and the foundation of La Gloria or Gloria City – as it was first known - soon followed.

Many left once they realized that they had been deceived, but others decided to stay and make their fortunes in a nation entering a new period in history that presented a range of opportunities for economic development.

Writer and researcher Enrique Cirules collected important elements of the town’s history in his ‘Conversación con el último norteamericano’, which includes an interview with A. William Stokes. Stokes was just two years old when he arrived in Cuba with his parents, as part of the first group.

He lived in La Gloria until his death in 1974, by which time he was the last of the original U.S. settlers on the island.

Shortly after the Cirules book was published, all interest in the colonization project faded.

However, a new documentary entitled Gloria City, by the actress and producer Isabel Santos, has revived the curiosity of many.

Her 40-minute documentary retells the strange tale of this town and its foundation by those first U.S. settlers.

The result of a collaboration between the Cuban Film Institute and the Camagüey City Historian’s Office, it projects the memories of Stokes and of current La Gloria inhabitants as it weaves a comprehensive and unique insight into a utopian but manipulated pursuit of dreams.

The Gloria City documentary’s director has described it as a way to settle a debt with both the history of the town and the late Cuban filmmaker Humberto Solás, the first interested in making a film on this topic.

The documentary is undoubtedly of anthropological value and is an example of an almost perfect piece of
HAVANA. Cuban filmmaker Magda González hopes to win her public's heart with ¿Por qué lloran mis amigas? (Why Do My Friends Cry?), a movie about honesty, friendship and diversity.

Starring beloved Cuban actresses Luisa María Jiménez, Edith Massola, Amarilys Núñez and Yasmín Gómez, the director has said that her project does not specifically tackle gender issues but asks all who see it to reflect on human affairs in general.

The 82-minute long film narrates a reunion of four friends after 20 year and out of necessity, reviews their lives and friendships.

It comes to the screen following five years of hard work and is the result of a collaboration between Cuba’s Film Institute (ICAIC), RTV Comercial and the Audiovisual Media Arts Faculty.

It was very well received by the public and the critics as a non-competitive entry in the 39th International Festival of the New Latin American Film and is now on nationwide release in Cuba’s cinema network.

Hannah Imbert’s inspiration to write the script came from both a party her mother hosted from some friends and the Sandra Dooley’s painting Amigas (Girlfriends), which was hanging where the party was held.

Imbert says her film portrays the vast gap between today’s younger generation and that of 30 years ago.

She is very pleased with a final result that she believes communicates her intended message through special performances by Patricio Wood, Paula Ali, Ariadna Álvarez, Nestor Jiménez Jr. and Roque Moreno.

Tomás Piard directed the music by Juan Antonio Leyva and Magda Rosa Galbán.

The director had aspired to show in the film that diversity and difference are not necessarily obstacles to communication or friendship.

“Even though we may have different points of view, all of us, from our own unique perspectives have something important to contribute,” González said.

In addition to lauding tolerance and respect for plurality, she also praised her leading ladies for being intelligent, receptive and malleable women.

She said that “Working with the four actresses was really easy and they seemed to really enjoy the creative process, a vital element in any work.”

Núñez played a role that had been almost invisible in Cuban cinema, where female homosexuality had been something of a taboo.

Doing so was the realization of a personal dream, because she grew up surrounded by gays and considered them her mother’s friends.

Núñez believes her character is engaged in a struggle trying to fit into society and until she has an awakening, is afraid to be seen as different.

She realizes that life is short and really must be lived to the full and consequently decides to embrace herself and feelings.

Núñez said that it is a very brave decision indeed to “begin living life today.”

Massola plays a character based on real life and Gómez may have shared the filmmaker Magda’s sentiments, because her character is also impetuous and certain that her homeland can overcome any obstacle.

The actresses assumed a great responsibility because, apart from the retrospective scenes, the film was shot on one location only.

This added to the challenge of making people laugh, cry and reflect on their dreams, desires and frustrations and the many reasons they encounter to strengthen mutual friendships.
ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

5th Havana World Music Festival (Mar. 22-24)

Cuba's National Ballet Company, Gran Teatro de la Habana (Mar. 30-Apr 1)

22nd International Meeting of Ballet Academies (Mar. 25-Apr 7)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Young Cuban Film Makers Festival (Apr. 3-8)

I CHOOSE CUBA to vibrate

Cardiology and Cardiovascular Surgery Program

Cuba applies the most up-to-date techniques aimed at heart treating and, to do so, the country has a national cardiology network with internationally renowned specialists and cutting-edge technology in terms of surgery equipment and halls, as well as therapy units for post-surgical intensive coronary care and intensive cardio-surgical care, which allows specialists to carry out highly complex procedures.

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Relations under Strain

By Orlando ORAMAS

MEXICO CITY- The resignation of the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, Roberta Jacobson, has raised further concerns about the state of relations between these neighboring nations, and there is very little cause for optimism on the horizon.

The U.S. Department of State rejected the charge that the change will have a radical impact and claimed that it had a reserve of capable and talented officials to replace Jacobson.

Heather Nauert, a State Department Spokesperson, also defended the 'withdrawal' of senior officials who have up to now led U.S. policy on Latin America.

The truth is; however, that Jacobson is leaving her post at a time that ties with Mexico are not at their strongest, primarily as a result of president Donald Trump's statements and policies.

It must not be forgotten that in the race for the White House, Trump made a campaign promise to erect a wall along the border with Mexico and indicated in discriminatory and derogatory terms that his migrant policies on Mexico and other Latin countries would be harsh.

A few days prior to her resignation, the U.S. ambassador and the Mexican Interior Minister presided at an official ceremony for the construction of the new embassy in Mexico.

The U.S. embassy will be Mexico's largest and located in an exclusive residential area, but its foundations are being set in a context of deteriorating bilateral relations.

The ceremony was the last formal act the U.S. diplomat undertook before a sharp and controversial phone call between presidents Donald Trump and Enrique Peña Nieto.

Mexico's Foreign Office said in a brief dispatch that during the call on February 20th, both leaders had expressed condolences for tragic events that claimed the lives of a large number of victims: the Florida school shooting and the loss of a military helicopter in Oaxaca following an earthquake there.

The Washington Post; however, reported it as a tense conversation that lasted more than 50 minutes. The newspaper's sources described it as an uncomfortable exchange that portrayed Trump's impatience and irrationality.

The current occupant of the White House is continuing to insist that president Peña Nieto publicly accept his intention to make Mexico pay for the construction of his controversial border wall.

Within an hour of the call, the Mexican president had cancelled his first official visit to the United States for the second time, reportedly because of Trump's coarse rudeness.

But the controversy implies much more than that and has affected negotiations on the renewal of the North American Free Trade Agreement, which includes Mexico, the United States and Canada.

The U.S. negotiator was suddenly called back to Washington for consultations and Mexico's Economy Secretary, Ildefonso Guajardo, also travelled to Washington for urgent talks with his US counterpart, Wilbur Ross.

Trump's announcement that the United States was ready to impose a 25-percent import tax on steel and aluminum – a measure that will affect thousands of workers in factories across Mexico – caught Guajardo off guard.

The United States has also announced a revision of its sugar and tomato import agreements with Mexico, two key sectors for the country's economy.

This is the background to the resignation by Roberta Jacobson and the questions it raises about a new ambassador's agenda. The post will be filled by a Trump appointee, although the endorsement of Congress is required.

This is all taking place amidst a Mexican electoral campaign which has the left-wing candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador ahead of government candidate José Antonio Meade in the polls.

Trump seems to have decided to make life politically difficult for his Mexican counterpart at a particularly sensitive time.

Gender Violence Deeply Rooted in Dominican Republic

By Edilberto MENDEZ

SANTO DOMINGO.- The disturbing truth that at least 100 women in the Dominican Republic die every year at the hands of partners or former partners, indicates the extent to which this social malaise is rooted in society here.

Conservative calculations signal that 2017 was a particularly bad year, with the number of women killed exceeding 130, one of the highest figures in a decade which surpasses the tragic body count for 2008, when 134 women died violently in this Caribbean nation of 11 million inhabitants.

Most such acts leave motherless children in their wakes, except when they too die at the hands of a murderer who then takes his own life or flees the awful scene.

At the time of writing, five crimes of this nature have been registered, two less than during the same period in 2017.

The figure is of course still unacceptably high and last February was dominated by the arrest of a man who killed his partner and the three children he fathered with her.

The incident outraged society here and brought the urgent need to address the issue of gender violence very sharply into focus.

Dominican President Danilo Medina referred to the "relentless violence that the country is experiencing and its tragic consequences for women and girls in particular."

Calling for measures to reduce the high indexes of gender violence, the president condemned "irreverent and feeble male chauvinist attitudes that destroy family coexistence and the peace everybody desires in their homes and communities."

He emphasized the need to introduce greatly enhanced measures to eradicate domestic violence and identified the raising of awareness and education as crucial for the reinforcement of the family unit as a cradle for solid values and respect.

Solange Alvarado, Director of the National District Attorney's Violence Survivor Help Center, stated that the roots of the problem lie in society itself and "differences between men and women that are formed from the very moment of conception."

The Dominican Republic's Attorney General, Jean Alain Rodríguez, also denounced the scourge facing the nation and said that the government intends to revert such degrees of brutality through concrete action.

He stressed that prevention is the key challenge in the fight against manifestations of gender violence.

The A.G. also reiterated that the Dominican Republic is working to promote peaceful coexistence between men and women, on the basis of equality of esteem and mutual respect.

The nation is undoubtedly facing a monumental task going forward and these recent incidents rank amongst the worst the Dominican Republic has experienced to date.

One can only hope that horrific scenes such as the slaughter of a woman and her 6, 9 and 10 year old children are never repeated and that real, fruitful and effective measures to curb domestic violence are introduced.
SANTIAGO DE CUBA. - Africa will be
the central focus of two important
cultural events in this almost
503-year-old Eastern Cuban city in
March and April, in tribute to some
of its most fundamental roots.

Between March 15th and 21st, the
16th Santiago Alvarez In Memoriam
International Documentary Festival
returns to recall the renowned
Cuban filmmaker and architect of a
genre that his work renewed.

The city will once again welcome
international documentary film
makers to both the Cuba Movie-
theater — the festival’s principal
venue — and the ‘fringe’ Turquino
Cinematic Cultural Center venue, in
the village of El Cobre.

This smaller venue is located in
an area of particular significance,
where the power of the iconic Lady
of Mercy Sanctuary to draw visitors,
compliments the once important
mining center and the Monument
of the Runaway Slave, a work by
Alberto Lescay that stands high on a
hill in memory of those who valiantly
opposed the shameful scourge of
slavery.

An African theme will feature
throughout the events theoretical
workshops, which include the
conferences “From Afro to Black;
Africanism and Skin Color in Cuba’s
Social Imaginary” by Zuleica Romay,
and “On Africanism in Cuba” by
Heriberto Feraudy.

The illustrious Mexican
researcher Sauhdí Batalla, will
lecture on ethnographic fieldwork
and research and African, black and
slave influences in documentary film
making.

Dozens of documentaries will
compete in different categories, and
jurists will reward the best and most
important works.

This year’s festival will also
honor Dr. Martha Cordiés, director
of the African Cultural Center,
Nancy Morejón, poet and National
Literature Prize winner, Eduardo
“Choco” Roca, painter and winner
of the latest National Universal Arts
Award, and Televisión Serrana on the
occasion of its 25 years of founding.

The African Cultural Center
will host the 16th International
Conference on African and Afro-
American Culture from April 11th to
16th, with international scholars and
members of the African diplomatic
corps, expected to attend.

Santiago de Cuba’s summer
International Caribbean Festival
has for 37 consecutive years been
the highlight of the city’s universal
cultural celebrations. It brings artists
and intellectuals from around the
world together to address elements
present in popular and traditional
spirituality and culture.

The Pepe Sánchez Trova Music
Festival – Cuba’s oldest such event—
also takes place here in March.

Recognized as being of crucial
importance to Cuba’s vibrant
organic cultural identity, the city of
Santiago de Cuba promotes
a state of perpetual renewal to
continuously attract artists, scholars
and enthusiasts from even the most
remote corners of our globe.

From its famous carnivals –
designated a National Cultural
Heritage event - to modest local
celebrations, the city has become
synonymous with humanity’s most
noble and sincere expressions of
cultural diversity and understanding.
HAVANA.- Cuba’s capital is a cosmopolitan city, always alive with people from all around the world.

Many of its central streets are busy and attractive, but Old Havana's Obispo in particular stands out for its colorful and eclectic ambience and the diversity of establishments there.

It forms part of an area that during colonial times was located within the city walls and its history can be traced back to the 16th century, close to the foundation date of the San Cristóbal de La Habana Village itself, in 1519.

It was designed around a central square, a characteristic feature of Spanish-American cities, and is very narrow in order to offer shelter from the sun.

Located south of the Plaza de Armas and adjacent to the Palacio de los Capitanes Generales, the street runs all the way from the shores of the Havana Bay to Monserrate street.

Obispo is crossed by Baratillo, Oficios, Mercaderes, San Ignacio, Cuba, Aguiar, Habana, Compostela, Aguacate, Villegas and Bernaza, streets that all date back to the capital’s earliest days and named after professions, important figures or lifestyles.

History records that it was previously called San Juan, because it led to the 1794 built church of San Juan de Letrán del Consulado.

It was later called Obispo because two bishops, Fray Jerónimo de Lara and Pedro Agustín Morell de Santa Cruz, resided there at different times.

An 1897 name change to Weyler Street was rejected by the people of Havana, who in 1898 destroyed the signs identifying it by that name.

In 1905 it was named Pi Margall, in honor of a passionate defender of Cuba’s rights in Spain.

When in 1936 original Havana street names were restored, it was once again baptized as Obispo.

The street had its own entrance gate until the old city walls were demolished on August 8, 1863.

In keeping with trends of the time, the earliest residences on Obispo, that formed the original urban center of the newly-formed settlement, were made from palm tree leaves.

Over time these were replaced by stone built and tile-roofed homes. Obispo is presently an attractive and charming pedestrian street, full of people from all corners of the globe who delight in both the ancient and the modern cityscape slides it majestically projects.
HAVANA.- Still immersed in recovery efforts after the tragedy caused by Hurricanes Irma and María last September, the Caribbean leaders have designed a wide program of actions to go on with their development and tackle the serious problems facing the region.

The heads of governments of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) member countries held a summit in Port au Prince, the Haitian capital, where they discussed many issues that are affecting the area.

The natural phenomena that hit several CARICOM member countries and the need to get ready for the storm seasons were among the main issues analyzed during the summit, which was presided over by host President Jovenel Moïse.

The CARICOM member countries' vulnerability to natural risks and the effects of climate change are key challenges for their sustainable development, the participants said in the final report.

In this regard, the meeting highlighted it is important to strengthen resilience initiatives and implement joint social, economic and environmental policies that strengthen the infrastructure and ensure the right response to natural disasters.

The magnitude of post-hurricane recovery efforts require huge financial funds that the region cannot generate by itself, the participants said. For that reason, they called for innovative mechanisms and the recapitalization of the existing agencies to face the crises.

The 2017 hurricane season has been the fifth most active and devastating in the Caribbean region, as it caused serious damage in Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, the British Virgin Islands, Turks and Caicos, Anguilla, Saint Martin, Cuba and Puerto Rico.

The Haitian summit also asked the Caribbean countries to coordinate approaches and participate in the negotiations to finalize the Working Program of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and applauded the stance adopted by the Alliance of Small Island States.

Likewise, it urged the regional nations to sign the Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement second commitment period as participants view it as “an urgent issue on the way to foster more ambitious actions on climate change.”

The CARICOM heads of government also recognized tourism as the region’s most important economic sector, and for that reason it must receive a major boost in long-term development plans.

In this sense, they praised the creation of the Global Tourism Resilience and Crisis Management Centre and Observatory that will begin operating in Jamaica. Its objective is to prepare the regional countries to deal with and recover from the impact that natural disasters may cause on tourism, the economy and the population.

Moreover, the CARICOM leaders warned that security, especially the high crime and violence rates in the area, damage the entire society, harm the people’s confidence in their governments, reduce the competitiveness between the main industries and service providers and affect the influx of investors.

In the face of this situation, the summit asked to create a task force that can suggest new regional solutions to fight the escalation of crime and violence in the CARICOM member states.

Other topics included in the agenda were the importance of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy for regional development, air transportation and the rejection of the European Union’s unilateral decision to include Caribbean countries on the black list on non-cooperative tax jurisdictions, published in December 2017.

The Port au Prince Summit was attended by heads of governments and top representatives from Haiti, the Bahamas, Barbados, Grenada, Jamaica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Dominica, Guyana, Montserrat, St Kitts and Nevis and Suriname.

Prótesis total de No Cementada • Prótesis total de rodilla • Endoprótesis de hombro • Endoprótesis de codo • Arthroscopia de hombro • Arthroscopia de rodilla • Hemiarthroplastias • Cirugía de la espinillera • Corrección de deformidades con fijador Externo • Se deben introducir dos nuevos programas cirúrgicos de mínima accesos del pie y aplicación de PRP en diferentes patologías

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HAVANA.- Organizers of Havana’s 21st International Agribusiness Fair, FIAGROP 2018, from March 17th -25th , have promised that a greater number of both domestic and foreign exhibitors than ever will be represented.

What was originally a celebration of the Cuban cattle and livestock sector that featured popular rodeo competitions, among others, now draws more foreign exhibitors every year to a fair that covers the broader agricultural, sugar-producing and food sectors.

The fair will be held at the Rancho Boyeros showground, near Havana’s José Martí International Airport.

This, Cuba’s oldest such site, has made special preparations for the event because this year the venue celebrates its 85th anniversary.

When interviewed by The Havana Reporter, the Director-General of the Rancho Boyeros Showground company, Adolfo Aroche, and event manager Ignacio Caraballo explained how the grounds had benefited from ongoing developments in the agribusiness sector and outlined the annual investments made to renovate, maintain and expand the exhibition areas.

The development of new areas has facilitated growth in both indoor and operations.

Caraballo added that this type of exhibition promotes business opportunities for foreign investors, enhances an agribusiness culture and promotes the sport of rodeo, all of which make the fair more attractive to both national and foreign visitors.

Last year there were 253 exhibitors, 172 between indoor stands and pavilions and 81 in the outdoor arena.

This year we expect a higher number of exhibitors and a higher quality of exhibition, an important trend for such events,” he noted.

The fair takes place in a 2059 square meter area comprising five pavilions in which stands are set, and a 6000 square meter outdoor area for the exhibition of technology, equipment, machinery and tools that support the sectors productive processes.

Germany will have its own pavilion again this year where 12 firms affiliated to its Agriculture Department will exhibit their technologies and other international participants will exhibit products on individual stands and at infield presentations.

Caraballo concluded the interview by describing FIAGROP as a traditionally heterogeneous event attended by more than 120,000 visitors, during which lectures, talks and clinics compliment the showing of livestock, the commercial marketplace with more than 60 exhibitors from 20 countries and a range of other activities.
HAVANA: Investments by Chinese firms in Latin America and the Caribbean region surpassed 25 billion dollars in 2017, according to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and further projects are already underway in countries that include Panama.

ECLAC estimates that China’s Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) accounted for 15 percent of the total income generated in the region during 2017.

The body has also revealed that the region benefited from the significant growth in the decade between 2005 and 2016, to the tune of some 90 billion dollars or 5 percent of regional FDI.

Between 2005 and 2017, Brazil — with 55 percent of the total value was the principal beneficiary and was followed by Peru with 17 percent and Argentina with 9. These three countries accounted for 81 percent of the Chinese contribution to overall FDI in the region.

According to ECLAC, by 2010 it extended throughout diverse sectors and that 27 percent of all such investments between 2004 and October 2017 went to mining.

Metallurgic and fossil fuel projects respectively took 42 and 18 percent of the total registered between 2004 and 2010 but just 20 and 6 percent during the 2001-2017 period, because Chinese investment had extended to cover the telecommunications, real estate, food, automobile and renewable energy sectors.

Investment projects were complimented by mergers and acquisitions and construction contracts won by Chinese firms also grew in importance.

Between 2011 and 2016, Chinese companies signed contracts valued at 40 billion dollars in transport, energy and other key fields.

According to the UN agency, the telecommunications, automobile and non-conventional energy sectors can play an important role in the development of Latin America and the Caribbean, and provide attractive opportunities to Chinese firms.

The first cooperation agreement between the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and China for the 2015-2019 period emphasized the expansion of bilateral FDI flows and the need to stimulate investments worth 250 billion dollars by 2025.

A business delegation from China’s fourth most developed city in Qingdao province has expressed interest in investing more than 5 billion dollars in Panama’s infrastructure, construction, tourism sectors, port activity and the financial system over a five year period.

Xu Jian, Vice Counselor of the Qingdao Bureau of Commerce, confirmed this at a forum held at Panama’s Chamber of Commerce, Industries and Agriculture in early February, during which both parties signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the exchange of information, business opportunities and the promotion of investments.

Ten years ago, China’s FDI represented a mere 1.3 percent of the global flow, while with 16.5 percent, the United States held the number 1 spot.

According to United Nations figures for 2016, Chinese outward foreign investments had reached an all-time high of more than 183 billion dollars and for the first time exceeded FDI incomes, making the country a net investor.

Trade between China and the Latin American and Caribbean region also increased and according to ECLAC, it was worth some 266 billion dollars to the region, an important achievement on the heels of a previous drop in bilateral exchange values for three consecutive years.

During 2017, 10 percent of all regional exports went to China and 18 percent of the region’s total imports came from the Asian Giant.
HAVANA. - Cuba’s performance at the World Indoor Athletics Championships will be remembered by their British hosts for being the best by a Latin American team at the event held in Birmingham city from March 1-4.

Cuba’s new teen star Juan Miguel Echevarría stole the limelight with a record gold medal winning 8.46 meters long jump. The Cuban, who turns 20 next August, surprised the sporting world by beating his own personal record by almost 40 centimeters.

This young jumper seems to have been born to defy predictions and to follow the example of five-time indoor champion Iván Pedroso.

Echevarría also goes down in the history of the contest for jumping more than eight meters in four out of five attempts.

By Rauldel PINO

Cuban pentathlon competitor Yorgelis Rodríguez also performed excellently to take a bronze medal in a competition she dominated after the third event.

Another young star from the New World reiterated her intention to make a lasting mark on the world scene when the 22-year Venezuelan triple jumper Yulimar Rojas demonstrated her dominance at Birmingham’s indoor event with a 14.63m jump, to compliment the outdoor crown she claimed just seven short months ago.

The absence of her principal opponent, Colombian Catherine Ibargüen, did not diminish the glitter of her gold medal because, in addition to her Rio de Janeiro Olympic silver medal, this is the third title she has won since 2016.

Jamaican Kimberly Williams personal best silver medal winning jump of 14.48 meters also represented an outstanding performance. This time out, Williams improved on her third place of four years ago at the indoor championship in Sopot, Poland.

Cuba finished a most respectable seventh on the final medals table and Yulimar’s medal ensured that another Latin American nation, Venezuela, came home ninth.

Jamaica took the 11th spot on the back of titles won by Williams in the triple jump event and Danniell Thomas-Dodd’s silver in the shot put.

Brazilian Triple jumper, Almir dos Santos, also brought a medal home, having registered a 17.41 meter jump, just 2 centimeters shorter than the gold winning performance.

Latin America was also well represented in Birmingham by Trinitarian Deon Lendore’s 400 meters bronze.

The region's athletes brought home a total of two gold, three silver and two bronze medals to improve on their Portland 2016 results.

The Birmingham meeting was not without controversy.

Spanish athlete Óscar Husillos was first past the post in the 400 meter event in a record breaking time, only to be summarily stripped of the title for having stepped on the inner line of his lane.

And just three days before his 22nd birthday, US sprinter Christian Coleman let the world know he is no flash in the pan, by running 60m in 6.37 seconds — a record for the event and just three points off the world record he set in Albuquerque a few days earlier.

The unforgettable Sprint King Usain Bolt seems now to have a worthy successor to the sprint throne.

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