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Cuba and the U.S.A interested in the ICT sector businesses

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Entrepreneurs from the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector in Cuba and the United States explored this Wednesday the possibility of developing projects of mutual interest in this area, during the development of a business forum at the emblematic National Hotel in Havana.

On the Cuban side, the meeting was attended by representatives from the business groups of Informatics and Communications, and the National Postal Services, as well as from the Cuban Telecommunications Company (ETECSA). While on the American side, officials from the communication services provider Liberty Latin America and its branch C&W Networks, other businessmen from Transfer To and S3 also participated.

When opening the forum, the vice-president of the Cuban Chamber of Commerce, Ruben Ramos Arrieta, said that the forum is an "excellent opportunity to maintain bilateral contacts, share ideas and exchange on present and future challenges."

According to the official, the use of the ICTs as an essential tool for boosting economic and social transformations is not an exception for the island's authorities.

In that sense, he remarked that the country is making progress in the computerization process of society, which prioritizes the use of the Internet in sectors like health, education, and scientific and cultural development.

According to data provided by the vice-president of the Cuban Chamber of Commerce, the public coverage of the mobile telephony services in the Cuban territory is estimated at 85.5 percent; with more than 5.5 million mobile lines, of which 2.5 million can access the network of networks.

"These and other results of the sector in recent years have been achieved in the midst of a difficult situation caused, fundamentally, by the intensification of the economic, commercial and financial blockade of the United States against the Island, aggravated by the full application of Title III of the Helms-Burton Act," specified Ramos Arrieta.

"Undoubtedly, it remains the main obstacle to our economic and social development", he added.

As part of the socio-economic update, there is state determination "to gradually advance in the process of computerization of society, the development of telecommunications infrastructure and the industry of computer applications and services," said the Chamber of Commerce official.

He also added that this entity "makes available to all businessmen attending the meeting the knowledge of trade policies that help to find, as a whole, the best ways to achieve more convenient mechanisms in possible negotiations".

In a press release, Liberty Latin America representative Chris Coles declared that any opportunity to meet with the Cuban government and Cuban companies, such as ETECSA, "is something that is always in our interest".

Their company operates throughout the Caribbean, Central, and South America and, according to the businessman, "Cuba represents a large part of that environment."

"As long as we can find common ground and ways to bridge historical divisions, it will be in our interest,"

he said.

The president of ETECSA, Mayra Arevich Marín, told journalists that "the company has more than 10 beneficial agreements in force so far", at the same time that she expressed the "intention to continue developing these projects and evaluating the possibility of new ones".

According to the official, in today's forum, they share a common space with corporations with which they work and "intend to continue developing initiatives regarding computerization".

"We are working on the development of the infrastructure because, in addition, it is the role of ETECSA; but we have the barriers imposed by the blockade on communications," she insisted.

He argued that because of Washington's policy, "there is no protection under U.S. law against the seizure of funds from financial relationships that we may have. That continues to be an obstacle to the progress of relations between the parties, and the companies".

Arevich Marín criticized the effect that the actions of the Internet Working Group for Cuba or Task Force are bringing to the development of the computerization of society, "which seeks to interrupt the country's efforts in this process".

Vice-Minister of Communications: "There is a willingness to move forward."

At the end of the event, the Vice-Minister of Communications of Cuba, Ernesto Rodriguez Hernandez, reported that the meetings identified work projects with opportunities for both parties, "in which progress will continue in future encounters".

He added that the commitment to continue recognizing mutually profitable goals and collaborative initiatives was confirmed.

The vice-minister declined to offer details on Wednesday's negotiations between Cuban and U.S. companies until they are completed, "to have firmer matters on which to address the issues".

However, he assured in brief contact with the press that the discussions "have been good and constructive", furthermore he said there is an understanding between the parties and the certainty that it is possible to work.

Rodriguez Hernandez reiterated that this rapprochement takes place amid a complex situation in which the intensification of unilateral measures implemented by the current U.S. administration against Cuba stands out, as well as actions focused on hindering the process of computerization of society.

"The limitation of the use of electronic commerce platforms, which affects bilateral exchange, as well as the constant financial persecution, have greatly damaged business in this sector," he said.

Despite the current political atmosphere, "Cuba has more than a dozen agreements in force with U.S. companies in the ICT sector, beneficial to both parties," evidence that "they continue to favor negotiations with Cuban companies," in spite of the obstacles of Donald Trump's government.

As part of the forum, U.S. visitors will also have the opportunity to appreciate the capabilities created in the country for training professionals in this area when they visit the University of Computer Science tomorrow.