



Enhancing Productive Capacities through STI and Science Diplomacy in Cuba



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Introduction

Firstly, it is important to highlight the situation to which Cuba is subjected to due to the siege imposed almost six decades ago by the extraterritorial application of the economic and financial blockade imposed by the USA. Therefore, we seek alternatives to develop trade based on an equitable distribution of the wealth generated among its inhabitants.

In Cuba, there is a political will to promote trade. Our economy is open; it has no limits in trade, as long as it complies with the principles of the WTO and respect for sovereignty. It implements an open Foreign Trade, it is inserted in the international context, working internally to increase and diversify the commercial exchange in all the regions. Although the development of the national industry is promoted as a way to stimulate the domestic economy, expand jobs and allow the insertion of the results of science, technology and innovation, as well as boost the momentum to the private sector.

The design of trade policies in Cuba is based on replacing imports, promoting trade in services and increasing the supply of exportable products and services for market diversification.¹

Cuba is a signatory of the Trade Facilitation Agreement of the WTO and as a developing country; it works on the implementation of the commitments made in pursuit of it. At this moment the installation of the Single Window of Foreign Trade is being developed, as a mechanism to make the procedures related to the import and export of merchandise more flexible and expeditious. This entails permanent training for institutions and operators of commerce in general, for the leading role they play.²

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Non-tariff measures are of great importance because they are translated into authorizations or special permits granted as a precondition for importing a product. The obtaining of these permits must be with simple, transparent and predictable systems. On the other hand, the rules of origin to determine the origin of a commodity, and the phytosanitary and zoo sanitary norms are intended to protect human, animal and plant life and health, through the control of pests, diseases and toxic substances of plants, animals and foods. In all this, Cuba works in accordance with the commitments subscribed to by the WTO and the regional agreements of which it is a signatory.

STI in Cuban Trade Policies

The trade support institutions in Cuba are the Chamber of Commerce (www.camaracuba.cu), Procuba (<http://www.procuba.cu/es>), and Center for Overcoming Foreign Trade, also the Research Centers of the Cuban and world economies and the National Institute of Economic Research. All of them, from their profile, bring benefits to the development of foreign trade, some from promotion, market research, experiences of international practice and the training of officials and entrepreneurs.

The National Development Plan³ for 2030 and the National Exports Strategy⁴, as well as the Foreign Investment Law, conceive information and communication technologies as the axis for development. The computerisation policy of the whole society that includes the business sector is being implemented at the moment: one-stop shop, electronic Government, maximization of social networks. The creation of technological science parks is encouraged where national companies are inserted, at the same time the creation of high technology companies and the university-company link is promoted.

Cuba benefits and stimulates the advancement of new technologies, it even creates software to make viable the management of the company that carries out foreign trade, however, the economic and commercial blockade to which we are subject, hinders access to cutting-edge technology. It is another reason why the development of the intellect and the national industry constitute a necessity in which we work intensely in our country.

In little more than 30 years, the Cuban economy went through two total processes of technological reconversion with characteristics and costs not happened before in Latin America.

The crisis of 2008 and the intensification of the North American blockade have made the need to recover the country's production capacity even closer: between 2009 and 2018, economic growth barely exceeded 2 per cent per year, while the coefficient of investment is around 10 per cent of GDP. In that context, the market and the private sector, together with foreign direct investment, have played a more active role in the country's development strategy. Currently, the private and cooperative sector accounts for 31 per cent of national employment. In Cuba, the development of productive capacities is based primarily on the promotion of human capital.

Innovation plays a decisive role in the Cuban economy. In the National Assembly of Popular Power (<http://www.parlamentocubano.gob.cu/>), the Committee on Education, Culture, Science, Technology and Environment meets, where the Science, Technology and Innovation policy that defines the priorities in these areas, as well as establishing development strategies, has recently been approved and the results of scientific research, based on good practices that ensure the quality of national productions and increase exports. In addition, this legal norm includes the creation of Technological Scientific Parks that seek to promote the creation of specialized companies based on new knowledge, new business models and capacities to create innovative companies, providing conditions for research, development (R&D), the innovation, technology transfer and scientific and technological services with high added value.

This policy recognizes the role of interface companies in the connection between universities and science, technology and innovation entities and the productive and services sector. In the same environment, the category of High Technology Companies is established, so it is defined that an entity of this type must show an intensive activity in research, development and innovation; have high technological standards; as well as close the cycle of research, development, innovation, production and marketing of products and services of high

added value with emphasis on the foreign market; among other particularities, as a support for the sustainable development of the country, based on the integration and linkage between all the actors that participate with the objective of increasing the value-added goods and services to increase efficiency of national production, exportation and increase the quality of life of the Cuban population.

It is easy to notice that in these conditions, in a small economy like Cuba, unable to guarantee the endogenous production of all knowledge, the development strategy must be based on the increasing incorporation of science, innovation and technology, as it is proposed in the National Economic and Social Development Plan until 2030. Foreign trade and foreign direct investment are decisive vehicles in the appropriation of this knowledge.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the ability to generate scientific or technical advances, innovate or attract talent are essential aspects of science diplomacy. Its main objective is to improve international relations and

interests between two or more countries and their image abroad through the exchange of scientific and technological capabilities.

In that sense, taking into account the rapidity with which changes occur in the world where new global challenges affect all countries, scientific diplomacy is an essential tool for the effective application of the policies projected by Cuba and their insertion in the arena international, as well as the implementation of the planned objectives.

Endnotes

- ¹ <http://www.procuba.cu/en/invertir/oportunidadesneg>
- ² <http://www.granma.cu/cuba/2019-11-05/ventanilla-unica-facilitara-el-comercio-exterior-cubano-05-11-2019-22-11-48>
- ³ The Ministry of Economy and Planning of Cuba govern the planning.
- ⁴ National Exports Strategy is prepared by Ministry of Foreign Trade and Investment of Cuba