

First Cuba Trade Expo Conference To Focus On Current U.S.-Cuba Business Climate and Opportunities That May Arise With The Changing U.S. Policy Towards The Island



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Expert panelists and industry leaders to highlight tourism, agriculture, energy and real estate sectors, among others



MIAMI (March 10, 2009) – The Cuba Trade Expo (www.CubaTradeExpo.com) organizers today announced updates to their roster of experts and industry leaders set to participate in this year's conference, which will take place in Miami, Florida from March 19-20. The two-day conference will feature academic and business luminaries who will address issues and opportunities related to U.S.-Cuba relations in the face of impending legislative changes promised by the 112 th Congress and the Obama administration.

"The Obama administration brings with it a commitment to change current U.S. policy towards Cuba, therefore it's not a question of 'if' there will be change, but rather a question of when this change will occur and what it means to businesses and consumers in the U.S. ," said Jonathan Bedard, conference organizer of the Cuba Trade Expo. "The Cuba Trade Expo is a unique forum for experts, companies doing business with Cuba , elected officials and those who are just passionate about Cuba to exchange ideas and opinions, discuss facts and myths and elevate dialogue on this heated issue to the next level."

Despite the 47 - year - old embargo against Cuba , the U.S is the still the seventh largest exporter to Cuba (4.3% of Cuba 's imports are from the U.S.) according to the CIA World FactBook. The White House's commitment to change the current U.S. policy towards Cuba and the recent approval of a Congressional bill to do the same, portend a lift of the Bush Administration's restrictions on travel and remittances to Cuba and once again casts a spotlight on this island nation in the waning days of the Fidel Castro era.

In order to prepare the U.S. business community for these and many more expected changes, Cuba Trade Expo will bring expert panelists from across the country with a wide variety of backgrounds to discuss current Cuba business, provide analysis on current U.S-Cuba relations, address the pros and cons of recent policy shifts from a business and political perspective, as well as zero in on key industries likely to be affected, including agriculture, energy and tourism.

Following is an updated list of panels, including new presenters set to participate in the 2009 Cuba Trade Expo:

DAY 1: Thursday, March 19

Celebrate Cuba kick-off reception: Event will feature a soon-to-be-named keynote speaker.

DAY 2: Friday, March 20

Panel

1

U.S./Cuba Relations : Session will provide highlights on the current state of U.S./Cuba policy and how businesses and individuals can benefit from the coming changes.

Moderator: Larry Luxner, editor of *Cuba News*

Panelists:

Jose Azel , a senior research associate at the Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies at the University of Miami . Azel left Cuba in 1961 as a 13 year-old political exile via Operation Pedro Pan- the largest unaccompanied child refugee movement in the history of the Western Hemisphere.

Robert L. Muse , an attorney who has testified on legal issues involving Cuba before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and several other international government bodies.

Panel

2

Business in Cuba Today : Panelists will offer a glimpse of Cuba 's economic past and a forecast of its future and the potential impact on business opportunities.

Moderator: Johannes Werner, editor of *Cuba Trade and Investment News*

Panelists:

Jay Brickman , vice president of government services for Crowley Maritime Corporation, who has served on the Latin American Trade Committee of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Kirby Jones , who was described by Newsweek as having, "better contacts in Cuba than any other American," and by the New York Times as the "man to see about business in Cuba ."

Jake Colvin , vice president for global trade issues at the National Foreign Trade Council.

Panel

3

Cuba Tourism : Panelists will discuss the Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act and speak to Cuba 's tourism infrastructure and consider future improvements.

Moderator: Larry Luxner, editor of *Cuba News*

Panelists:

Daniel E. Waltz , a partner at the Washington D.C. law firm of Patton Boggs LLP where he focuses on international trade and transactions, including compliance with U.S. embargoes of countries such as Cuba , Iran , and Sudan and Syria . He worked closely with Members of Congress and their staffs during the drafting and amending of the

Trade Sanctions Reform Act of 2000 that authorized licensed sales of agricultural products from the U.S. to Cuba.

John McAuliff , executive director of the Fund for Reconciliation and Development. He is the first American to participate in Cuba 's annual International Tourism Fair and organized a meeting to discuss US/Cuba educational exchange at the Latin American Studies Association held in Montreal.

Panel **4**
Agriculture and Energy : Panelists will discuss trade opportunities for businesses ranging from oil conglomerates to small consulting and supply companies.

Moderator: Johannes Werner, editor of *Cuba Trade & Investment News*

Panelists:

Jorge R. Piñon , energy fellow at the University of Miami 's Center for Hemispheric Policy and international energy consultant.

Dwight Roberts , former director for international trade at the Texas Department of Agriculture and current president and CEO for the US Rice Producers Association.

William A. Messina , an agricultural economist with the Food and Resource Economics Department at the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS).

Panel **5**
Cuban Real Estate: The panel will examine how Cuban law addresses property, its ownership by Cubans and examples where foreigners directly own real estate as well as property claims through the U.S. Foreign Claims Settlement Commission.

Moderator: Jonathan Bedard, Founder of the Cuba Trade Expo

Panelists:

Timothy Ashby , general counsel to Siboney Ltd. and to the Havana Group, Inc.,

Antonio R. Zamora , focuses on foreign investments, real estate and corporate law at Squire, Sanders & Dempsey, LLP.

Panel **6**
Investing in Cuba 's Future : Panel will discuss innovative ways to invest in the future of Cuban business and ways to get ahead of the curve by identifying opportunities that most investors do not understand.

Moderator: Carlos A. Saladrigas from the Cuba Study Group.

Panelists:

Mark Entwistle , president of Chibas Consulting Inc., and former Ambassador of Canada to Cuba from 1993 -1997. During his tenure, Canada became Cuba 's largest trade and investment partner.

Philippe Colombani , is an economic advisor of the French Embassy in Havana and has been stationed there since 2005.

Panel **7**
Effects of Embargo Changes: a Crossfire-style discussion between opposing sides of the Cuban embargo debate.

About **Cuba** **Trade** **Expo:**
Cuba Trade Expo is an annual conference with a simple goal: to deliver accurate and in-depth information on doing business in Cuba . The conference provides a venue where business owners, investors and others passionate about Cuba can come together to network, explore and learn about the issues and opportunities in the market. For more information about the Cuba Trade Expo or to register for the conference, please visit: www.cubatradeexpo.com

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