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by Lionel martin

havana, nov 6, reuter -- four canadian non-governmental organisations promised cuba that they will promote continued technical and scientific collaboration here as spokesmen for the canadian groups and the cuban government called on ottawa to reconsider its suspension of aid to cuba.

the agreement with the cuban state committee on economic collaboration was signed by the canadian university service overseas (cuso), its equivalent in quebec, suco, the inter-church fund for international development (icfid) and oxfam-canada.

the agreement declares that the signatories +are moved by the desire to develop, in their respective spheres of action, scientific and technical collaboration between cuba and canada.+

deni l'hereux, chairman of the board of suco, said +we hope that now that we are four non-governmental organisations in the project, the canadian government will become more sensitive to the need for maintaining cooperation with cuba.+

the canadian government cut off aid to cuba in 1980 because, it said, cuba was no longer a most needy nation.

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gerin lajoie, the former head of the canadian international development agency (cida), who happened to be in havana as a private businessman when the agreement was signed declared to reuter that the real reason for the canadian aid cutoff was to punish cuba for its activities in africa and central america.

gerin-lajoie said that the canadian government was wrong in withdrawing its support in 1980 for technical and scientific collaboration with cuba, +thus forcing cuso to work heroically to keep the program alive.+ +technical and scientific collaboration, while helping the cubans to solve their food production and public health problems, can also lead to increased trade with canada. he said that cuba was canada's number four trading partner in latin america with a heavy trade balance in favour of canada.

fernando de cosio, former cuban ambassador in ottawa and now vice-president of the cuban state committee on economic cooperation, told reuter that +cida had a good programme administered by cuso to promote cuba's development in agriculture, engineering, medicine and other fields but +was was ended abruptly and nothing was substituted.+ +one can say, + de cosio said, +that we have been punished for our progress.+
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de cosio said that +canadian government aid should be reestablished as a way of bridging the gap between the kind of programme we had in the 1970's and the dramatic increase in cuba-canadian trade.+ he said that when cuban experts become acquainted, through technical collaboration, with canadian knowhow and equipment, it will naturally lead to an increase in trade.+

the cuban official said that cuba was recognised internationally as a developing nation and that the steep fall in sugar prices, cuba's main export product, has hit the cuban economy hard.

betty plewes of cus's overseas operation service said that +from everything we've seen, cuba has used its aid effectively.+ +they have carefully documented what they have done with the aid and they have been completely willing to share the results of their work with canada and third world nations.+

robert fugere of the inter-church fund for international development declared that he would like to see the canadian government renew its aid to the non-governmental organisations now carrying out programmes in cuba.

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in the 1970's cida gave an outright grant of 2.6 million dollars for technical and scientific collaboration with cuba and also granted a 10 million dollar soft loan with thirty years to pay. last year aid to cuba through canadian non-governmental organisations was: 50,000 dollars (cuso), 25,000 dollars (icfid), 5000 dollars (suco) and 2000 dollars (oxfam-canada) m the ministry of intergovernmental affairs of quebec (maiq) also granted cuba 22,000 dollars for improving its tourist industry. approximately 40,000 canadians visit cuba as tourists yearly, most of them from quebec.

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