

Xinhua. 2015. "Chinese company to build new residential zones in Venezuela".

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CARACAS, May 4 (Xinhua) -- This May marks a new beginning of China-Venezuela cooperation on affordable housing building projects with new agreements reached between the South American country and a Chinese company on the construction of new integral residential zones, local authorities said on Monday.

Venezuelan officials and representatives of the China International Trust and Investment Company (CITIC) Group have agreed to build integral residential zones in Venezuela's northern state of Aragua.

State Governor Tareck El Aissami said the ambitious plan aims to build urban housing units that will serve as a model for the rest of the nation.

MODEL PROJECT

The vision of building integral residential zones as a model for the nation, Aissami said, was promoted by President Nicolas Maduro, who instructed officials to create integral residential zones equipped with recreational and sports facilities, community centers and others.

At a meeting in Caracas later last week, Venezuelan and Chinese representatives agreed to build 2,000 additional housing units in the state's city of Hugo Chavez, named after the former president. Some 600 homes are expected to be ready by the end of the year.

CITIC General Manager Peng Qi praised the state and country's efforts to meet the people's housing needs.

"We have noticed the governor has made a great effort to build housing and we are willing to work together with the Bolivarian government of Aragua," said Peng.

In fact, the Chinese company's construction speed and quality have already been regarded as a model in the nation.

In December of 2004, China and Venezuela signed an agreement to cooperate on affordable housing programs. CITIC won its first project at the end of the following year to build 20,000 housing units in four states at a value of 942 million euros (998 million U.S. dollars).

Venezuela's late President Hugo Chavez once praised "Chinese speed" when he visited CITIC's projects in November of 2010.

In late 2010, torrential rains left more than 30,000 Venezuelan families homeless, prompting Chavez to launch the Great Housing Mission in 2011, a program that aims to build 3 million homes by 2019.

The Tiuna affordable housing project in Caracas is one of the first projects of the Mission, jointly undertaken by companies from China, Russia and Belarus.

Although the part constructed by Chinese companies started almost one year later than those of the other two countries, the progress of Chinese project has become the fastest.

Venezuelan Defense Minister Carmen Melendez visited the Tiuna project in April, 2014, saying it was the best among all the affordable housing projects in the country in terms of both construction speed and quality.

The Venezuelan government has invested more than 73 billion dollars over the past four years to build affordable housing, Maduro said in a recent televised statement on the anniversary of the government's Great Housing Mission.

Maduro said 701,250 homes have been built in the first four years since the program was launched.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Venezuelan Housing Minister Ricardo Molina told Xinhua that over 14,000 new apartments have been built in cooperation with Chinese companies.

"That figure will increase because the relationship with China will continue to grow over time," he said.

As the contractor of model projects, CITIC tries to bring more benefits to the local communities, including job opportunities, together with quality apartments.

In its first project in Venezuela, CITIC hired as many as 1,800 local workers. In the Tiuna project, the company also hired 1,600 local workers to cooperate with 800 Chinese workers.

Guo Sen, CITIC's executive manager at the Tiuna project, said that it was hard to complete the project with high quality and fast speed, especially in Venezuela, which lacks construction materials. But CITIC managed to overcome all difficulties by establishing new plants to provide important materials, which in turn created more jobs for locals.

The company even equipped apartments in the Tiuna project with furniture like cabinets, closets and sanitary appliances for free.

During a visit to the Tiuna project in July 2014, Chinese President Xi Jinping called it a friendship project of China and Venezuela as it reflects the cooperation between the two nations.

Tian Jike, a staff member of CITIC working at Tiuna, said that the most important thing he got from this project was the friendship and trust from Venezuelan people. "I've made really good friends with local colleagues," he said. Enditem