

**SPEECH BY DEPUTY MINISTER OF HEALTH, DR SIBONGISENI
DHLOMO ON THE OCCASION OF THE GRADUATION CEREMONY
OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN MEDICAL STUDENTS GRADUATING
FROM CUBAN UNIVERSITIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN**

FRIDAY, 07 JULY 2023

Master of Ceremony,

Today we confirm that this relationship and partnership between South Africa and Cuba has yielded huge human capacity for the medical fraternity particularly medical doctors. This is a remarkable milestone that cannot be hidden or forgotten given the impact it has in South Africa. This is a Legacy and a living testimony of the impact of this relationship brought about by our stalwarts.

Our thank goes to the people and citizens of Cuba, for hosting our graduands and make them feel at home 12,180 km away from their home, and also becoming a beacon of hope for the world and international affairs. Let me also congratulate our brothers and sisters in Cuba and the government of Cuba on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of Cuba's international medical collaboration which was celebrated on the 23 May 2023.

I joined the officials at Cuban Embassy on this important day for Cuban citizens to show our unwavering support and wished the Cubans well.

This collaboration signify the impact Cuba has internationally in the area of medical collaboration and other related faculties.

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Today we are here to confirm Cuban Medical Degrees to 454 medical doctors who worked tirelessly, day and night, and ***now they are waiting for their names to be called, while their bodies are shaking with disbelief***, these are the words by the late Legendary musician and songwriter Tsepo Tshola

Let me take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the provincial governments which have been consistently participating in this programme through sending students to Cuba to become doctors to contribute to our public health system as the country is preparing to rollout the National Health Insurance to ensure all South Africans have equal access and affordable healthcare, irrespective of their financial muscles and geographical location.

In this group, the graduands are represented provinces as follows: Eastern Cape (27), Free State (3), Gauteng (124), KwaZulu-Natal (43), Limpopo (110), Mpumalanga (63), North West (56) and Northern Cape (27).

These numbers are making a significant impact in terms of increasing our Human Resources for health in particular, medical doctors in rural areas and underserved and disadvantaged communities where the students were selected.

To date we have produced over 3000 medical doctors through the Nelson Mandela/Fidel Castro Medical Collaboration. Our desire to increase medical professionals from which South Africa has benefitted the South African health professions immensely through this increase of numbers.

The demand for doctors and other healthcare workers remains a huge challenge in our healthcare system and this increase provides inroads of increasing health capacity.

I wish to say to doctors who are graduating today, Welcome to the cadre of health professionals, dedicated man and women, dedicated force that has demonstrated resilience during the height of COVID-19 pandemic and who will serve their communities with dignity and in ethical manner.

As you take the Hippocratic Oath today, kindly note that this oath describes a promise made by yourselves to try not to harm anyone. The oath obligates your efforts to protect individual rights and public interests. In your daily practice as you serve those that depend on you in our health services, please balance competing interests and values, and draw your

actions on ethical principles as tools for weighing conflicting claims and for reaching appropriate decisions.

Your role is to save lives of our people. I

