Ecuador ends agreement to receive Cuban doctors

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Ecuador's Interior Minister said Cuban doctors will be replaced by national specialists.

The Ecuadorean government announced Tuesday its decision to put an end to a bilateral cooperation agreement on health between the South American country and Cuba, which enabled the island's doctors to work in Ecuador.

The announcement was made by Ecuadorean Interior Minister Maria Paula Romo who said the move means "there will be no renewal of agreements or new agreements between Ecuador's and Cuba's health ministries."

According to Romo, Cuban doctors will be replaced by Ecuadorean specialists who will be called to apply from tomorrow to fulfill the nearly 400 places that will be free.

Romo also said these agreements are the last ones of this kind to be in force until the end of this year, however she added, the government is hoping to terminate them before that time. "When we started the government, there were many more [doctors] but the agreements were progressively replaced by direct hiring positions," the official added.

Former Ecuadorean President Rafael Correa had stated at the time of the deals with Cuba that "Ecuador did not lack talent but required more doctors and specialists."

Cuban doctors had come to Ecuador with extensive experience to take care of patients in public services all over the Andean country. They helped to strengthen the education system of

medicine and allowed to better serve the population, especially lower-income citizens.

The agreement between Ecuador and Cuba was part of the Cuban medical missions which are a cornerstone of the island's international cooperation programs for the world.

In a similar fashion, the departure of Cuban doctors from Brazil earlier this year saw severe consequences for that country's most vulnerable population as the government of far-right President Jair Bolsonaro struggled to fill up the vacuum left by the physicians; El Salvador is another country that halted the medical programs with Cuba.