Cuba attends post-forum dialogue of Pacific Islands Forum for first time

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Cuba has made a splash at the Pacific Islands Forum in Palau on Friday by joining in the post- forum dialogue for the first time.

Cuban Ambassador Plenipotentiary in the region, Maria del Carmen Herrera Caseiro, said her nation shared common values on the themes of the conference, such as the oceans and climate change.

Cuba has in the past 10 years increased its involvement in the region through a range of health sector programs.

“From 2005, we sent Cuban doctors to different Pacific Island countries upon their request. We also started granting scholarships to Pacific island countries to study medicine in Cuba, as a way to develop their human resources,” Herrera Caseiro said.

Cuba currently supplies medical staff to Pacific nations, while nearly 200 Pacific Island students study medicine and primary health care in Havana.

“They started coming to Cuba in 2006 and the first medical graduates from Kiribati are back in Tarawa, working in a kind of internship under Cuban doctors,” Herrera Caseiro said.

Palau President Tommy Remengesau Jr. said it was important for Pacific Island nations to have a diverse range of partnerships at international levels.

“We don’t need politics, we need partners — people who are conscious of what our future is and wish to partner with us in achieving that right way forward,” he said.

“With Cuba, they’re teaching our sons and daughters in the medical profession, providing scholarships for school.”