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Last Cuban Doctors Who Fought Ebola Back Home

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The last Cuban health workers who were combatting the Ebola epidemic in Guinea Conakry returned to the island this past 22nd of May.

For over six months, a brigade of 256 health professionals, belonging to the Henry Reeve internationalist work team, combatted the deadly virus in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia, putting their own lives at risk for the sole satisfaction of fulfilling their duty, and in response to the petition made to Cuba by UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon and World Health Organization Chair Margaret Chan.

An initial team of 158 medical doctors and nurses returned to Cuba from Sierra Leone and Liberia on March 23. Since then, small groups of doctors have been returning to Cuba, until all of those mobilized to Western Africa (where, next to physicians from other countries, they saved lives and halted the spread of the epidemic), had come back. There were two regrettable losses, victims of malaria.

Another brigade from the same contingent traveled to Chile to help save lives and treat those affected by the floods that recently scourged the north of the country.

More recently, following the large-scale earthquake that shook Nepal on April 25, another brigade was deployed to the Asian country, where it set up a field hospital equipped with a surgical unit, a recovery ward and an intensive care unit.

These are only the most recent examples of the immense medical efforts Cuba undertakes around the world, in solidarity with all who require their services anywhere, and it discredits all who deny Cuba's status as a medical force to be reckoned with, a status it has achieved despite having had to develop in the grip of a tight blockade imposed by the United States over fifty years ago.

The above claim is backed by the declarations made by Dr. Luis Di Fabio, Cuba's representative before the Pan-

American and World Health Organizations (PHO/WHO), who recently stated before the press that Cuba's primary healthcare system is excellent and that its sanitary system is unique, comprehensive, free and fraternal – and that it ought to be implemented in other countries.

Di Fabio also underscored the medical cooperation initiatives that have been undertaken by Cuba in 151 different countries since the 1960s, initiatives that have involved 325,000 health professionals and have benefited more than a billion patients.

He also referred to Cuba's medical cooperation efforts (undertaken jointly with the PHO and WHO) in Brazil's *Mais Medicos* program, where the island has sent over 11,000 medical professionals to offer services in more than 4,000 municipalities, benefiting 63,000,000 locals who didn't have access to such services before. He stressed the qualifications of Cuba's human resources and stated that many of the medical doctors trained in Cuba are today health ministers in their respective countries.

Lastly, he referred to efforts aimed at taking such medical universities to East Timor, Angola, Guinea Bissau and Eritrea, where Cuban professors are training medical personnel to help achieve mass health coverage in those nations.

I have paraphrased the declarations made by Luis Di Fabio, a UN expert who has been in Cuba for quite some time and is aware of the results reported by Cuba's health system (as well as the difficulties the country has had to face (owing to the way in which companies refuse to sell life-saving medications to Cuba), so that you don't have to take my word for it. Considering only what this ongoing revolution has done for the health of the Cuban people and many other peoples around the world, we can say that it's been worth the sacrifice.

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