

# *Cuba pays tribute to Nelson Mandela with graduation of 700 medical doctors*

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Havana, July 5 (RHC)-- Cuba paid tribute to South African hero Nelson Mandela on the 100th anniversary of his birth -- which will be celebrated this coming July 18th -- with the graduation on Wednesday in Havana of 700 medical doctors.

The function was chaired by Cuba's First Vice President Salvador Valdes Mesa. South African Presidency Minister, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, in charge of National Policy Planning and Evaluation, and Cuban Healthcare Minister Roberto Morales Ojeda also attended the gala.

Addressing the graduates, the dean of the University of Medical Sciences in Havana, Luis Alberto Pichs Garcia, recalled that "Madiba", as Mandela was affectionately called, was a dear friend of Fidel Castro and that it was their extraordinary fraternity that had made it possible for a special South African medical training program to start in Cuba in 1997. The dean said the program has resulted in hundreds of South African youths completing medical studies in Cuba, with 2,860 currently undergoing courses here.

South African Minister Dlamini-Zuma stated that more than 1500 South Africans had graduated as doctors in Cuba. She expressed gratitude for such contribution, which the minister said has changed the

face of South Africa's medical coverage, especially in rural and poor areas.

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