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KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo is happy that 10 KZN students had trouble free journey to Cuba

Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo is very elated that 10 students from six KwaZulu Natal Districts, namely; 2 from Ugu; 2 from Umzinyathi; 2 from Ilembe; 2 from UThukela; 1 from Amajuba and 1 from EThekweni have safely arrived in Cuba where they are going to study medicine. These students consisting of 7 females and 3 males left the country earlier in the week accompanied by the Department's Deputy Manager for the Bursary Component who has to ensure their assimilation and introduction when they get to Cuba.

Before they left, the students were given an orientation course and a farewell send-off attended by MEC Dhlomo; their parents as well as KZN practicing Doctors who also studied and qualified from the Cuban Universities. Orientation consisted mainly on the type of life the students will be exposed to in Cuba; the Health Systems used in that country as well as rules and regulations that they are expected to adhere to. They were informed that Cuba does not only assist students coming from South Africa but that they will be studying and competing with their peers from other countries across Africa and Latin America.

MEC Dhlomo also gave them an account of the Cuban history that even though that country has been under economic embargo since the early 1960's; it has the best health system in the world and that due to its patriotic and progressive outlook it is even prepared to train doctors for other fraternal countries. Students were asked to behave themselves and not partake in boycotts and class disruptions just like some of the students who did that last year. They were also told that if they were served pork or eggs repeatedly, they should understand that Cuba is under the economic embargo and sanctions that are politically motivated. They were told that the most important thing for them is an understanding that they were selected from really struggling families and that they are to grasp this opportunity with both hands; excel in their studies and come back to uplift their families and communities that raise them.

All the ten students have now been allocated space at Sagua le Grande Academy where they will be taught the Spanish language which will be the medium of their instruction and thereafter do five (5) years of Medical studies before returning to South Africa to complete their sixth (final) year of Medicine. Once they have completed their studies, they will write their final Cuba exam which will be followed by a graduation.

'Upon completion the students will do an Internship and then a year of Community Service, before being allocated to Health Care Institutions in the communities where they come from. This is to ensure that in all corners of our Province including rural areas there is a qualified Doctor guaranteeing access to quality health care for our people.'

Dhlomo continued to express delight in the progress made so far with the production of Doctors for the Province, saying: 'There have been 513 students sent to Cuba from KwaZulu-Natal since 1998 and the latest 10 is but part of the 300 strong group that we have selected and will be dispatching to Cuba before the end of the year.'

ENDS.



MEC Dhlomo with students (in white)