

February 19, 2010

RE: Emergency Supplemental Aid to Haiti

Dear Member of Congress:

The 7.0 earthquake that struck Haiti on January 12, 2010 was the worst natural disaster to occur in the Western Hemisphere's modern history. Initial estimates indicate that at least 212,000 people have died, nearly 1 million are internally displaced and almost 300,000 people injured. The response of the US government in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake has been swift. President Obama pledged \$100 million in emergency assistance, and numerous U.S. government agencies – including the department of State, the Agency for International Development, Department of Defense, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Department of Homeland Security, and others – quickly deployed staff and contributed resources to support emergency humanitarian relief in Haiti. The international community has responded similarly.

Even while continuing to carry out substantial efforts to provide life-saving relief to millions of Haitians, the United States and the international community must support a massive, Haitian-led reconstruction and transformation plan designed to support their goal of a democratic, equitable and productive society. Although assessments of the extent of the damage are still being conducted by the United States, the United Nations, the World Bank and others, initial estimates of costs are well over \$10 billion. A transformative reconstruction for the island nation will require a long-term financial commitment. Haiti must be rebuilt in a way that reverses the poverty and environmental degradation that has made it so vulnerable to natural disasters. A return to Haiti as it was on January 11 is not advisable.

Given the scope of the task ahead, a letter was sent by some of the undersigned organizations to President Obama on January 30 asking him to request an emergency supplemental of \$3 billion dollars to meet the immediate and long-term needs in Haiti for relief, reconstruction and development. In a testament to the urgent need for additional funds, the U.S. Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA/USAID) has been forced to transfer 40% from the budgets for all other humanitarian assistance programs worldwide in order to support its response in Haiti. Unless additional funding is made available soon, U.S. humanitarian assistance to places like Somalia, Sudan, and Pakistan will be drastically reduced. We are also mindful of the need for Haitian reconstruction aid not to reduce the already limited development and humanitarian assistance to the Western Hemisphere.

For these reasons, **we respectfully urge you to support a supplemental appropriations request.** Furthermore, any supplemental funding should not be

taken from other regular budgets designated for humanitarian or development purposes. We also ask you to guarantee that aid be allocated and disbursed within the framework of the principles below in order to avert similar disasters in the future.

- 1. Haitian-Led Reconstruction:** The Haitian government, although severely weakened by the earthquake, must lead the national recovery and reconstruction effort. Haitian non-governmental and community based organizations must be involved in the design and implementation of the reconstruction plans. Their participation must also be guaranteed at the Spring international donors meeting in NYC at the United Nations. The active participation of these groups can help ensure ownership in the process, rebuild and strengthen capacities of both Haitian government and civil society, and promote equitable reconstruction in the cities and the outlying provinces.
- 2. Build on Existing Plans:** The post-earthquake reconstruction plan must build on and strengthen plans for long-term development that already exist. Haiti's National Strategy for Growth and the Reduction of Poverty (DSNCRP) is a development plan that was finalized in 2008 after consultation. After the four hurricanes of 2008, the plan was revised to respond to new needs and vulnerabilities exposed by the hurricanes. These plans should not be discarded but used as the foundation of an improved plan that incorporates and responds to the development needs resulting from the earthquake. Non-state actors' reconstruction and development plans of Haiti post-earthquake must be geared towards meeting the goals and objectives of the Haitian national revised plan.
- 3. Decentralized, Sustainable Development:** The reconstruction of Haiti must be decentralized and promote sustainable development. Rebuilding Port au Prince to the way it was risks repeating past errors and future catastrophes. Instead, reconstruction must include the provinces and the long-ignored rural sector of Haitian society in order to decrease overpopulation in the capital. There must be a focus on investing in rural development and sustainable agriculture to reduce rural poverty through job creation and increase national food security. Reconstruction must also include strategies to mitigate risks related to future natural disasters, including establishing earthquake-resistant building codes and the reforestation of Haiti.
- 4. Protection for Vulnerable Populations:** The estimated 1 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), half in Port au Prince and half already dispersed across the ten provinces, have particular protection needs that range from proper shelter and documentation to the risk of physical harm. Women and children are especially vulnerable to sexual violence and exploitation in the aftermath of a disaster and too often find that the assistance they need is underfunded or overlooked. As such, it is important that a reconstruction plan fully implements the *USAID Policy on USAID Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons* and *USAID Assistance*

to Internally Displaced Persons: Implementation Guidelines that is based on the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement framework for protection and assistance to the displaced. Approaches to reconstruction must also take into account the ongoing protection needs of IDPs living in transitional shelters. We have an opportunity to act on the lessons learned in other crises to ensure that the protection needs of IDPs, women and girls, orphans and vulnerable children, persons with disabilities and amputees are integrated into the Haiti earthquake recovery plan.

As part of the long-term recovery efforts in Haiti, we also urge the United States and the international community to employ a regional approach to the provision of assistance and protection for Haitians. In particular we urge processes and structures that facilitate cooperation between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Space should be established for cooperation by civil society organizations, governments and other stakeholders in both the Dominican Republic and Haiti on a range of issues, including human rights; disaster preparedness, mitigation, and relief, and environmental protection. We urge the U.S. and international community to help facilitate these bi- and multi-lateral discussions.

A revised reconstruction plan for Haiti will require financial resources and time. We strongly urge you to make a long-term commitment to Haiti by supporting an emergency supplemental and consider provisions that allow for a two-year window to designate and disburse funds based on the revised development plan. As more information becomes available, we will provide further recommendations on the type of fund that should be created with oversight mechanisms.

We appreciate the immediate bipartisan concern that the Congress has demonstrated towards the immense scope of the natural disaster in Haiti.

Thank you.

ActionAid
Agricultural Mission
American Jewish World Service
America's Development Foundation
Americas Relief Team
Beyond Borders
Center for Economic and Policy Research
Center for Human Rights and Global Justice, NYU School of Law
Church World Service
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Global Exchange
Grassroots International
Groundswell International
Haiti Sustainable Development Foundation
Hands on Disaster Response

Health Empowering Humanity
Honor and Respect Foundation
Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti
International Relief & Development
Kledèv
KONPAY
Latin American Working Group
Lutheran World Relief
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office
Oxfam America
Plan USA
Quixote Center
Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights
Sustainable Organic Integrated Livelihoods
TransAfrica Forum
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
Washington Office on Latin America
World Hope International