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### **PRESS RELEASE**

**The Bureau of International Lawyers (BAI) is shocked to learn that five (5) days after the earthquake, the emergency aid needed by the affected population is still slow to come, and shocked also to realize that the Haitian government has failed to show respect for the principles of humanitarianism and accountability.**

The Bureau des Avocats Internationaux (BAI), in its primary mission of defending the rights of the most deprived, the inalienable, and inherent rights of human beings (in particular those of victims of state terrorism, of cholera imported by the Mission of United Nations for Stabilization in Haiti (MINUSTAH), of the women and girls, victims of rape, sexual assault and other abuses), wishes to express its sympathies to the Haitian people, especially to the populations of the departments of Nippes, Grand-Anse and the South, directly affected by the earthquake of Saturday August 14, 2021 which caused enormous losses in terms of material damage and loss of life.

Early information shows an as yet incomplete assessment that is of extreme seriousness. According to the newspaper Le Nouvelliste<sup>1</sup> reporting the last partial evaluation of Tuesday, August 17 by the Civil Defense, 1,941 people have already been found dead, 9,900 injured have already been identified, 60,759 houses were destroyed and 76,121 houses were damaged. Rescuers were able to extract 34 people from the rubble. Public buildings are damaged or collapsed. Thus, the great majority of the population of Nippes, The South and Grand-Anse finds itself suddenly homeless and plunged into an unparalleled humanitarian disaster.

Moreover, this devastating earthquake worsens a socio-economic situation that was already

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<sup>1</sup> Robenson, Geffrard, the short story writer, consulted online August 18, 2021 (August 17, 2021), Earthquake: 1941 dead, more than 9900 wounded, the toll is growing.

explosive, taking into account that these three departments directly affected by the earthquake, have not yet recovered from the material and human damage recorded from hurricane Matthew in 2016. This is on top of the overall context of the country, marked by a terrible political crisis with an illegitimate and incompetent de facto power, and by the devastating effects of the January 12, 2010 earthquake which left more than 300,000 dead, 1.5 million homeless and several thousand people with disabilities as a result of serious injuries.

The BAI is shocked to find that five days after the earthquake, the emergency aid needed by the affected populations, is still slow to come, because local authorities, in particular those of the Civil Defense, do not have the adequate means and infrastructure to help the victims. The slowness of the central authorities, combined with the difficulties from the passage of tropical storm Grace, further increases the toll. If it weren't for a very strong local and national solidarity, the results would have been even more tragic.

Haiti has a long tradition of misappropriation of aid to people in humanitarian distress. After the devastating earthquake of January 12, 2010, NGOs and other international organizations, taking advantage of the passivity of the Haitian State, have exploited the misery of the population to conduct humanitarian business. Moreover, until now, the squandering of the funds of the Interim Commission for the Reconstruction of Haiti (CIRH) after the earthquake is something of a taboo subject, since this fund was co-chaired by the former U.S. President Bill Clinton and former Haitian Prime Minister Jean-Marx Bellerive. The other case symbolic of this misappropriation of aid to victims of the catastrophe of January 12, 2010, is the squandering of approximately 500 million American dollars raised by the Red Cross after the earthquake, for the construction of only six houses.

To this end, while asking the Haitian State to take rapid intervention measures in favor of the victims of the devastating earthquake of Saturday August 14, 2021 while respecting their humanitarian rights, the BAI suggests that the de facto authorities in place carry out a comprehensive overall evaluation of the damage recorded, in order to identify the urgent needs of each affected community, especially in the most remote areas, and to establish a plan of intervention for the short and the long term, which will take into account the dignity of the victims. This governmental intervention must be carried out on the basis of transparency, information sharing and accountability.

The experiences linked to the management of internally displaced persons caused by the 12<sup>th</sup> of January 2010 were as catastrophic as the earthquake itself, due to non-compliance accountability mechanisms in the matter of humanitarian rights. In view of this, the BAI asks the de facto authorities to properly plan their interventions in the Great South, to coordinate national and international aid and governmental resources, based on the real needs of victims and vulnerable people, notably basic socio-economic needs and housing for displaced people in temporary

shelters, without any form of discrimination, while severely punishing all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse against women and girls.

Finally, the BAI welcomes the solidarity expressed within the Haitian population in favor of the most affected people and undertakes to observe, via its **Observatory of the Right to Health**, that the rights of victims of the earthquake of Saturday August 14, 2021 in the Great South are respected with dignity. Above all, the Observatory will work with national partners and international organizations with a view to developing, disseminating and promoting a **Code of Conduct for the Principles of Humanitarian Accountability** on the obligations of the Haitian State with regard to beneficiaries, taking into account the climatic and seismic conditions of the country.

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