



# Economic and Social Council

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Economic and Social Council  
Special Event on Haiti  
AM Meeting

### **ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL, IN SPECIAL EVENT, CONSIDERS WAYS TO OPTIMIZE COORDINATION, COHERENCE OF ACTIONS SUPPORTING BELEAGUERED HAITI**

#### **Representatives of United Nations System Entities, International Partners Report on Helping Nation 'Build Back Better'**

Meeting in a special event on the beleaguered nation of Haiti today, the Economic and Social Council heard updates on the start-up last week of the Interim Haitian Reconstruction Commission and the steering committee for its companion fund, and considered ways to optimize the coordination and coherence of its own actions for the country, which first found its way onto the Council's agenda in 1999.

Council President Hamidon Ali (Malaysia) said that six months after the 12 January earthquake devastated the island nation, the picture remained grim: hundreds of thousands of Haitians continued to live in conditions of great vulnerability; more than 1 million displaced were housed in temporary shelters in and around the capital city of Port-au-Prince; and more than 600,000 had migrated to other parts of the country in search of shelter, food, and work, with water and sanitation remaining key challenges.

Reviewing the international community's response, he said 150 countries had participated in the International Donors' Conference on 31 March, where \$5.3 billion had been pledged for the next two years, and a total of \$9.9 billion for the next three years and beyond. During the Conference, donors had supported the Action Plan for National Recovery and Development of Haiti, which was a road map highlighting the main reconstruction priorities.

Last week, United Nations Special Envoy Bill Clinton and Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive of Haiti had launched the Interim Haiti Reconstruction Commission, charged with implementing the Haiti Development Plan, he continued. The Council applauded that important first step for the country's long-term development process, and called for the translation of the commitments pledged in March into actions.

In that context, he said there was a need for a clear consensus on the reconstruction plan at the national and international levels, for which the international community must improve and maintain coordination and coherence. It would also have to strengthen coordination between major stakeholders in order to increase the efficiency, coherence and effectiveness of foreign assistance to Haiti; align with the Government's national priorities; and promote trust, transparency, and mutual accountability.

He said that the Council's Ad Hoc Advisory Group, established in 1999 to put together recommendations on Haiti's long-term development and reactivated in November, had become even more relevant today. Its members had visited Haiti last week to assess the current economic and social situation, and would present its annual report, with recommendations, during the general segment of the Council's upcoming session.

By virtue of the combined efforts of various Haitian and international parties to build the capacity of the State to lead its own recovery and development, the country would recover, the President said. "It is only by determination and positive action that we will succeed. Rest assured that the Economic and Social Council will do its part for Haiti and its people," he added.

Leo Merores, Haiti's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, expressed gratitude on behalf of the country's people and Government, saying that the international community as a whole had stepped up in an unprecedented show of generosity. It had been exemplary in embarking on the difficult task of reconstruction, in keeping with the March reconstruction plan. The Interim Haiti Reconstruction Commission, officially established last week, was analysing several projects which would be submitted to the World Bank, the repository for the fund. However, much remained to be done to ensure that the work began and the needs of the Haitian population were met, especially given that the situation was compounded by the rainy season and the approach

of the hurricane season. Timely delivery of funds must be assured, he stressed.

With people living in temporary camps under inhuman conditions and with their most pressing needs unmet, a rapid disbursement of funds was needed, he said. It was also important to introduce corrective measures, which was the main purpose of today's meeting — ensuring the coordination and coherence of actions. Noting that actions by Haiti's partners had not always been aligned with the country's needs or appropriately involved Government authorities, he also cautioned against overlap in the actions of the United Nations system and those of foreign partners, while maximizing the impact of those projects.

Also speaking today's were the Co-chairs of the Donors' Conference: the United States; Brazil; Canada; European Union; France; and Spain. They all expressed resolute commitment to Haiti as it struggled to emerge from the quake's shattering effects. Speakers agreed that a good start had been made, including with the first meetings of the Haitian Reconstruction Commission and steering committee — both structured in such a way as to play an essential role in meeting reconstruction and development targets. They felt that the international community was fully mobilized to lend support to Haiti, although the task remained enormous and complex. They emphasized the importance of a coherent and coordinated approach to that task, on behalf of all partners. Haiti did not just need money, but constructive partners ready to help implement the Government's plan for the country's long-term reconstruction.

Presenting the conclusions from the Advisory Group's visit on behalf of the Permanent Representative of Canada was Gonzalo Gutierrez (Peru), who said that the Advisory Group was mandated to remain abreast of developments in Haiti and provide advice on long-term development and reconstruction, with a view to guaranteeing the coherence and sustainability of international support, on the basis of national development priorities and cooperation. The emphasis was on avoiding duplication and overlap among existing mechanisms. In compliance with that mandate and to better understand the situation on the ground, the Advisory Group visited Haiti each year and made recommendations, he said, adding that it had set as its aim this year to help promote coherence and coordination among United Nations entities and other bodies with Haiti and the international community.

Also participating in today's special event were representatives of international institutions with substantive programmes in Haiti, including, via video link, Nigel Fisher, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Haiti. He said the primary parameter for bringing all the work together was a focus on tangible results, not only in earthquake-affected areas, but around the country. Haitians must see the results of the investment, he stressed. As for the national action plan, what happened in terms of humanitarian action and the future of displaced persons would be important indicators of achievement in the early months.

He said that in the camps, the need for employment and education was repeatedly stressed as prerequisites for returning home. Part of that endeavour was the need to "exponentially increase" the removal of garbage and debris. On the agricultural front, he said that during the planting season, the United Nations, led by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), had been able to provide nearly 150,000 rural families with seeds and tools. In the area of education, work was under way with the ministry to "provide norms" in schools, and to focus on the reopening of 600 previously existing schools and 1,400 new tented ones.

Overall, the effort faced widespread media criticism that nothing was happening in Haiti, he said, emphasizing the importance of developing better information flows so it could be said that much was happening amid all the challenges. While there had been several positive developments, rubble clearance and the urban planning process were still massive and complex, he said.

Heraldo Muñoz, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), focused his remarks on the opportunity to build back, but better, saying that the Programme supported public dialogue on the democratic process and public administration reform. In providing support, UNDP felt that the following key principles must be respected: the Government had the lead; all actions should be fully aligned with the national plan; and no effort should be spared in ensuring full transparency and coordination. For UNDP, the key to implementation in Haiti was collaboration and coordination with other United Nations agencies and actors in an efficient, coherent and timely manner, he said.

Hilde Johnson, Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), told the gathering that the situation in Haiti was "completely unique". It was a children's emergency and a children's recovery effort, as 14 per cent of those affected were under the age of 14. Speaking via video link, she said that 1.5 million children had seen their lives "dramatically disrupted" and Haiti "is still not breathing".

She said education was her focus today because the earthquake had closed 5,000 schools. With many, many students and 1,500 teachers dead, the sector was badly affected, and the ministry's premises were completely destroyed. UNICEF was trying to help affected children return to school and the system recover, but its main interest was in delivering education to all Haitian children. That was not the normal back-to-school campaign; in Haiti, it was an "all to school campaign".

Also speaking via video link was Alexandre Abrantes, Special Envoy of the World Bank, who described

the Bretton Woods institution's "unabated" commitment to Haiti, saying it had been very committed before 12 January, but had ramped up its activities afterwards, in the amount of \$210 million. Among other things, the Bank had provided for a tripling of the number of children receiving school feeding daily and had increased by 40 per cent the number of those receiving tuition waivers.

He said UNICEF was also involved in a small urban community development project, to which it had added another \$50 million — tripling its investment in that area — to enable people to rebuild their houses and rehabilitate some social infrastructure, as well as support the Government in urban planning. Some \$500 million had been pledged for new allocations to Haiti, and in September, the Bank would know how much of that amount Governments had allocated. Once it knew that number, it would revise its World Bank-Haiti partnership strategy accordingly, he said.

Describing the Inter-American Development Bank's commitment to the effort was Peter Sollis, Senior Adviser to the Manager, Haiti Response Group, who said that, among other steps, the bank had waived the remainder of Haiti's debt. In terms of its 2010 programme, additional resources had been made available for Haiti with an increase in grant resources focused on three main areas: budget support; shelter; and reporting on donor activities, in coordination with efforts undertaken with UNDP. The bank would be heavily involved in Haiti in five main sectors over the next four to five years: transport; water and sanitation; agriculture; education; and private sector development.

In the ensuing discussion, questions and comments focused on the idea of transforming Haiti from what one representative referred to as an "NGO-driven development model" to a "State-driven" model. Another delegate stressed the importance of a human rights-based approach to the recovery process, and the need to meet the challenge of transitioning from relief mode to recovery mode. Questions were asked about how best to meet the immediate needs of road building and paying teachers' salaries, with emphasis on ways to strengthen the Government's institutional capacity to meet such challenges.

Panellists said that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had indicated a common desire to be part of a coordinated system, to "come into the fold", while Mr. Fisher noted that he sensed no resistance on their part in that regard; they were ready to fold into the overall structure of Government leadership and of the coalitions being formed around national counterparts.

Mr. Sollis warned against characterizing the situation in Haiti as one of two models — Government-driven and NGO-driven.

Mr. Munoz said it was clear that the situation had very much been NGO-driven, which had been part of the problem, and the target of complaints by the Government. UNDP felt that support would be going to Government plans and strategies as well as to building its capacities. As for what the Programme was doing to enhance the Government's operational capacity, he said it was working with the Ministry of Justice and Public Security to make it fully operational, and with the Planning and External Cooperation Ministry to make the aid that the country was receiving more effective and transparent.

Mr. Merores said Haiti did not know how many non-governmental organizations were operating inside the country, which created some difficulties. Nevertheless, in the recent past, he had also witnessed their willingness to be "a little bit more cooperative" when it came to coordinating their activities and informing the Government of their plans.

As for United Nations integration in the country, Mr. Fisher said that between 400 and 500 staff were already operating around the country, and not just in Port-au-Prince. He wanted to shift the focus from humanitarian response and hurricane preparatory to longer-term development. He provided the example of jobs, saying that upcoming elections were creating some political uncertainty, and reiterating the importance of "showing the Haitians results".

Mr. Abrantes made the point that there was no matrix on which to measure progress and counteract the image in the media that nothing was being done. As for teachers' salaries, there was already a fast-track grant to ensure that they were paid. He responded to another question by confirming that there was indeed a difference between pledges and money actually going through the system.

UNICEF's representative reported some 2,300 teachers and related personnel had been trained.

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