

January 29, 2010

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

As you know, the 7.0 earthquake that struck Haiti on January 12 is the worst natural disaster that has occurred in the Western Hemisphere's modern history. Initial estimates indicate that at least 150,000 people have died, nearly 1 million are internally displaced and almost 2 hundred thousand people injured. In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, you generously pledged \$100 million in emergency assistance and sent US troops to secure distribution routes for aid. The international community has responded similarly. Like everyone, we share the sadness for the loss of Haitian and international workers.

As the response to the immediate humanitarian crisis begins to decrease, the US and the international community must support a massive, Haitian-led reconstruction and transformation 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 Nations, the World Bank and others, initial estimates of costs are likely to be 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 possible nor is it advisable.

Given the scope of the task ahead, we urge you to request an emergency supplemental of \$3 billion dollars to meet the long term needs of Haiti. We also ask that aid be allocated and disbursed within the framework of the following principles 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 equally be involved in the design and implementation of the reconstruction plans. Their active participation can help ensure ownership in the process, rebuild and strengthen capacities, and promote equitable reconstruction in the cities and the departments. Such efforts should be supported by the United Nations.
- 2. Build on Existing Plans:** The post-earthquake reconstruction plan must build on 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 consulted broadly before being finalized in 2008. 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 to develop a plan that incorporates and responds to the development needs resulting from the earthquake. With regard to citizen security, the US should support Haitian government efforts in partnership with MINUSTAH to reform the police, judiciary and prisons in order to guarantee rule of law.

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 regions and departments to decrease overpopulation in the capital and focus on investing in sustainable agriculture to reduce rural poverty through job creation and increase food security. Reconstruction must also include designs to mitigate risks to natural disasters, including the reforestation of Haiti.
4. **Protection for Internally Displaced Persons:** The estimated 1 million internally displaced persons have particular protection needs that range from proper shelter, documentation to 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. The Administration has an opportunity to act on the lessons learned in other crises to ensure that the protection needs of IDPs in particular women and girls are integrated into the Haiti earthquake recovery plan.

Given the tremendous level of destruction and pre-existing development challenges in this country, a reconstruction plan for Haiti will require time. The planning must begin immediately and engage Haiti's government, private sector and civil society. The coordination of international support for that plan must also begin now. We hope that your Administration makes a decade-long commitment to Haiti and disburses funds over at least two years in support of a Haiti Reconstruction and Transformation development plan.

Thank you.

American Jewish World Service
International Crisis Group
Jesuit Refugee Service/USA

Latin America Working Group
Lutheran World Relief
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office
Oxfam America
Quixote Center
| Robert F. Kennedy Center for [Justice &](#) Human Rights
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
Washington Office on Latin America