



Special Event of the Economic and Social Council on Haiti

New York, 24 June 2010

SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

The Special Event of the Economic and Social Council on Haiti on 24 June 2010, was held in the context of the Council's mandate to "develop its ability to respond better and more rapidly to developments in the international economic, environmental and social fields" and to "support and complement international efforts aimed at addressing humanitarian emergencies."¹ The meeting was also held in the context of the Council's long-standing engagement with Haiti through its Ad Hoc Advisory Group on the country and as a response to devastating earthquake of 12 January 2010, the most recent in a series of major external shocks over the last two years.

II. OPENING SESSION

The Special Event, opened by the **President of ECOSOC, H.E. Mr. Hamidon Ali**, was well attended by delegations and representatives of the organizations of the United Nations Family, and civil society. It began with an opening statement by the President of the Council, who applauded the establishment of the Haitian Interim Reconstruction Commission (HIRC) and welcomed the progress being made in getting the Multi-Donor Trust Fund (The Haiti Reconstruction Fund) off the ground, which are both key to restarting the country's long-term development process. He also called for translating the commitments pledged at the International Donors Conference in March 2010 into actions and in that context, he underlined the critical role of the United Nations system in supporting the country's recovery as well as in ensuring the coordination of activities in the country. He noted that Haiti has been on the agenda of ECOSOC for a decade and recommitted the Council to supporting the country over the long-term.

H.E. Ambassador Léo Mérorès, Permanent Representative of Haiti, speaking on behalf of the Prime Minister of Haiti, Mr. Jean-Max Bellerive, expressed gratitude for the outpouring of support and updated the Council on the institutional arrangements made to oversee the reconstruction effort. The Interim Haiti Reconstruction Commission, officially established the week before, was analysing several projects which would be

¹ General Assembly Resolution 60/265.

submitted to the World Bank, the fiscal agent 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. 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 and underlined the importance of ensuring the coordination and coherence of actions.

The Co-Chairs of the Donors Conference, the representatives of the United States; Brazil; Canada; European Union; France; and Spain, made statements of support, expressing their 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 Interim Reconstruction Commission. 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.

H.E. Mr. Gonzalo Gutierrez (Peru), speaking on behalf of the ECOSOC Ad Hoc Advisory Group, reported on some key conclusions from the Group's recent visit. Ambassador Gutierrez reported that the situation is far yet from being ideal in terms of coordination and coherence of all involved partners in supporting the priorities of the Government. However, the magnitude of an unprecedented disaster, that came in addition to the low coverage/satisfaction of most basic services (health, education, rule of law), pose real and serious challenges to the response. He also noted that the recovery phase is not over, while reconstruction had to start in earnest. This again creates challenges in policy coherence in aid delivery and support to IDPs. He suggested that decentralisation of economic, political and social structures are an important way forward for building the nation. He noted however that it is difficult to decentralise what was not centralised, in this case the absence of government functions and structures. Understanding that political stability, socio-economic development and rule of law remain at the heart of a long term and sustainable development for Haiti, it is clear that much depends on the evolution of the political situation, including the current electoral process. He concluded by underlining the critical role of the UN system in Haiti even more so now that there is a multiplication of actors on the ground. Coordination and coherence will be key to the success of their actions.

II. KEY MESSAGES²

² The key messages are derived from the Panel and the interactive session with Member States. The Panel consisted of Mr. Nigel Fisher, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General and Resident Coordinator, Haiti; Ms. Hilde Johnson, Deputy Executive Director, UNICEF; Mr. Heraldito Munoz, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, UNDP, Mr. Alexandre Abrantes, World Bank

→ *the need to maintain the momentum for international assistance to Haiti and to encourage those who have made commitments to deliver on them promptly.* It was noted that there was a significant lag in the promise of assistance and its disbursements, including for the Haiti Reconstruction Fund and for the work of the Haitian Interim Reconstruction Commission. Confirmations of intent are only slowly being made. The challenge is how to keep the momentum going and translate intentions into concrete and timely reconstruction projects.

→ *the importance of a Haitian-led recovery process and the need to align aid to the national development priorities of the Haitian government.* All participants stressed the need for the Government to play a leading role in the recovery process and that all actions should be fully aligned with the Government's Action Plan for National Recovery, respecting the role of the Haitian Interim Recovery Commission in overall donor coordination. In this connection, the provision of budget support would also be important so as to give the Haitian Government the flexibility to respond to unmet priorities in the recovery programme. Regarding the need to shift from an NGO-driven model of development to a State-driven model, participants recognized the important role for non-governmental organizations to assist in the recovery and reconstruction, however, it was acknowledged that funding projects mainly through them makes it difficult to monitor, creating gaps in transparency and accountability. The view was also expressed that there may now be recognition by NGOs active in Haiti to align and coordinate their activities within the context of the priorities of the government so that mutual accountability, capacity building and transparency can be maximized.

→ *the need to ensure coordination and coherence among all stakeholders,* including the UN system, in the recovery process and in the transition from recovery to reconstruction. Within the context of the UN system, participants pointed to the need for more joint programmes in support of the national plan. In that connection, the “cluster approach” to coordination and coherence are the keys to sustainable development and successful reconstruction in Haiti. Partnerships are a crucial component to recovery and stability, and given the number of donors and stakeholders involved in these partnerships, coordination, including of NGOs, will be a decisive factor in their effectiveness.

→ *the importance of building the capacity of the State to coordinate and absorb development assistance and to deliver it to all regions in the country.* It was acknowledged that prior to the earthquake, local capacities were limited and now have been further degraded by the earthquake as result of death of civil servants, including teachers, police, health workers, and others as well as the destruction of Government buildings, schools and hospitals. Participants noted that that the disaster presented an opportunity to “build back better”, beginning with the provision of technical support, through embedding experts in key Government Ministries that would allow for more effectively planning and implementation of the recovery programme.

III. MAIN CHALLENGES

In responding to the earthquake, participants agreed that there are a number of challenges still facing the country. Among the most urgent remains the following:

- disbursing promptly the funds pledged at the International Donors Conference in New York so that Haiti can kick-start its reconstruction process;
- aligning the activities of all donors with the national priorities of the government so that the reconstruction framework becomes a Haitian-led process;
- delivering of humanitarian assistance in key sectors, such as shelter and the removal of debris, which still needs to be scaled up;
- rebuilding livelihoods by providing jobs and employment opportunities. These could be resuscitated through re-establishing of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), green jobs and continuing successful programmes such as Cash for Work. Restarting the private sector development is critical in this regard;
- providing adequate water, sanitation and resolving hygiene-related issues remain in the forefront of daily challenges;
- strengthening the response to sexual and gender-based violence, particularly in the camps where the internally displaced people live, has become a major concern;
- rehabilitating the educational infrastructure which is central to rebuilding the country in medium to long-term. The closure of 5000 schools and the deaths of 1500 teachers in addition to the fact that the majority of schools are privately owned make this objective more difficult, particularly with regarding to setting and monitoring standards.
- integrating temporary shelter into a broader urban planning process for permanent shelter is a complex process which needs international support.
- promoting a countrywide response in which deconcentration of economic activities and decentralization of the State apparatus supports rural development

Participants reiterated throughout the Special Event the central role of the UN system in supporting the Government of Haiti in the humanitarian phase and longer-term recovery and their desire for better coordination among the organizations of the United Nations but also between the United Nations and other stakeholders, including donors and civil society. The need to strengthen the institutions of Government and to assert its leadership role was underlined as key to reinforcing the sustainability of the country's recovery and reconstruction.

In considering the role of ECOSOC in supporting Haiti, including through its Ad Hoc Advisory Group, it was noted that it has been based on three elements: advocacy,

long term perspective and coordination. In the current context, the issue of development cooperation effectiveness, such as donors' alignment with national priorities and transparency of aid, is of particular importance. The Council, which has increased its role in this field through the Development Cooperation Forum, can also address these issues in relation to Haiti.