

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**BRIEFING TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
EMERGENCY IN HAITI
New York, 13 January 2010**

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen.

Our hearts and minds today are with the people of Haiti.

We are still struggling to learn the full extent of the devastation from yesterday's earthquake, but you have all seen the images on television — collapsed hospitals and schools ... public buildings in ruins, including the parliament, presidential palace, cathedral, the ministry of justice and many government offices.

Tens of thousands of people are in the streets, without shelter. Uncounted numbers remain trapped in the rubble.

Casualties can not yet be estimated but they are certain to be heavy. Of Haiti's 9 million people, initial reports suggest roughly third may be affected by the disaster.

Large portions of the capital, Port au prince, have been badly damaged. Basic services such as water and electricity have collapsed almost entirely. Some major transportation routes have been severely disrupted by surface cracks or blocked by rocks, fallen trees or collapsed buildings.

Medical facilities are besieged; many are simply not functioning.

The main port has been heavily damaged. The control tower at the Port au Prince airport has been destroyed; however, the airport continues to function.

The United Nations counts among the victims. Peacekeepers and civilian staff from many Member States are in Haiti and remain unaccounted for.

As you know, the UN Headquarters building in the Christopher Hotel has collapsed. We estimate that approximately 100 staff were still at work when the earthquake struck. Many continue to be trapped inside, including Special Representative Hédi Annabi and his deputy Luiz Carlos da Costa.

To take control of the situation and direct our immediate emergency response efforts, I am dispatching Assistant Secretary General Edmond Mulet, our former SRSR for MINUSTAH, to

Haiti this evening. He will be on the ground tomorrow morning to assume full command of the United Nations mission at this juncture. He will begin his work by seeking a meeting with the top leadership of the country.

Other UN offices have also been damaged, and 10 people are missing from a building adjacent to the UNDP compound that houses UNFPA, UNAIDS, UNIFEM, WFP, OCHA and UNEP.

At least 11 Brazilian peacekeepers were killed, and another seven are missing.

MINUSTAH troops worked through the night to reach those under the debris. So far, several badly injured people have been retrieved and transported to the MINUSTAH logistics base, which remains largely operational.

However, in several places along the base perimeter, desperate Haitians are seeking access in search of medical help, shelter or food.

Clearly, this crisis rivals, if not exceeds, the disaster of 2008 when a series of hurricanes devastated the island, and already the international community is mobilizing.

MINUSTAH has approximately 3,000 troops and police in and around Port-au-Prince to help maintain order and assist in relief efforts. MINUSTAH engineers have also begun clearing some of the main roads in Port-Au-Prince which will allow assistance and rescuers to reach those in need.

Staff from the UN agencies, funds and programmes and from MINUSTAH's offices at the Hotel Christopher have regrouped at the mission's logistics base near the airport, where they will begin the critical task of coordinating the incoming international relief effort.

The most urgent need is emergency search and rescue. A Chinese team has arrived in Port au Prince; at least two U.S. teams will arrive by this evening, and two more tomorrow morning.

Additional search and rescue teams are reported to be arriving from Guadeloupe and the Dominican Republic, and still others are on their way from many countries that have sprung to action.

Let me say that I am very grateful, on behalf of the United Nations and on Haiti's behalf, for these urgent efforts.

Clearly, a major relief effort will be required. In any emergency like this, the early hours and days are critical.

That is why I have directed the United Nation's humanitarian agencies to mobilize swiftly and in close coordination with the international community.

In the next few days, we will issue a flash appeal for Haiti. I expect my humanitarian coordinators to perform the necessary assessment of needs and funding as quickly as possible and report back to me at once.

It is already clear that there will be major needs in the areas of medical care, food, clean water and shelter.

In the meantime, I have ordered \$10 million to be released from the Central Emergency Response Fund, or CERF, to kick-start our response.

Throughout the evening and this morning, I have been in touch with key world leaders to make sure that our response will be well-coordinated, effective and, above all, immediate.

Just before meeting with you this afternoon, I spoke with President Barack Obama of the United States. He assured me that the United States Government will ensure all possible assistance as soon as possible to help overcome this crisis.

I am also in close touch with my Special Envoy for Haiti, President Bill Clinton, who is here with me. We will work closely with the U.S. administration and other international partners on ways to provide immediate relief as well as assistance on longer term reconstruction and rehabilitation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The challenges are complex, the needs are great.

To the people of Haiti, I say this: we are with you.

We are working quickly — as fast as humanly possible.

But if the days ahead are difficult, we can advance in hope ... guided by the clear knowledge that, in this dark hour, the community of nations will unite in its resolve and help Haiti to overcome this latest trauma and begin the work of social and economic reconstruction that will carry this proud nation forward.

Distinguished delegates,

On behalf of the people of Haiti, I thank you for your support ... and I urge you to work closely with us at the United Nations and the MINUSTAH mission, so that we may deliver for those so in need.

Thank you very much.