

Haiti Earthquake
UN assessment
Special Representative of the Secretary-General Edmond Mulet

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen [preliminary words of thanks]

I.

On 12 January Haiti was a country on the path to stabilization. Decades of violence were giving way to calm. Elections were being prepared. Economic reforms were underway. Although desperately poor, [with 80 percent of the population living in poverty], Haiti was becoming a country with hope.

That evening, in less than 60 seconds, hope was dealt a devastating blow. Words can not describe the suffering inflicted by the earthquake. Numbers lose their meaning as daily figures rise – more than 112,250 lives lost, 194,000 injured and 235,000 receiving water out of an estimated 500,000 in need. Some of you have seen this destruction first hand. Some of us have experienced it personally. No one remains untouched. We, the United Nations, are one in grief with the people of Haiti. We too mourn great loss.

The scale of this disaster is still hard to comprehend. The earthquake destroyed the seat of government and the heart of Haiti's economy. It razed the country's cultural heritage and centres of learning. Hospitals, schools and clinics collapsed. Critical ministries were destroyed. Almost every Government building that is still standing requires urgent structural assessment. Less than one third of the Haitian National Police are operating and its Headquarters lies in ruins. Roads are inaccessible and the major port is seriously damaged. Haiti's earthquake affected one third of the country. It devastated a State.

II.

A massive and immediate response is required. And it has begun. People from around the world have descended to Haiti to offer help. They have been hampered in their efforts by

the destruction of key access points. But each day help is getting to more people and more help continues to arrive.

We cannot underestimate the complexity of this relief effort or the challenges we face. We must respond to immediate needs, and, at the same time, tackle longer term recovery tasks. We must craft responses that meet specific and urgent needs. Yet we must act swiftly in the knowledge that the hurricane season is less than six months away.

Let me take shelter as just one an example. The earthquake left over 1 million people without a safe place to live. The Government and partners are working to respond to their immediate shelter needs. This is not just a question of providing tents or setting up camps. Shelter involves a whole host of critical inter-connected short, medium and long-term policy issues. These include public safety and security, health, access to jobs and education, governance, land use, environmental management and disaster risk reduction.

Depending on the decisions that the Government and international actors take during this crisis phase, Haiti's chances for recovery and development can be transformed. The provision of shelter could provide a solution to the urbanization that has undermined stability for decades. It could help create new communities, generate jobs in the rural economy, and build country wide capacities. Or it could create slums, new insecurities, social deprivation and millions of wasted dollars.

These are real choices. In making them, we must be mindful of our responsibilities. For too long Haiti has endured a fickle international community. Intervention after intervention has come and gone with little attention to the root causes of instability and poverty, or the appetite to tackle them. Crisis response has all too often stopped well before recovery has taken hold.

If Haiti is to emerge from the horror of today with the prospect of a hopeful future, we, the international community, need to accompany them on this journey. We need to make

a comprehensive and sustained commitment to build the capacity of the Government and the people of Haiti. And we must provide the resources that such an effort will demand.

Haitians too, have their own responsibilities to meet. This tragedy is a chance to break with the neglect, inequality and poor governance that has for too long characterized a country I love. The people of Haiti will judge their political, social and economic leaders on how they respond to pressing challenges. In the midst of this terrible time, the dignity that people have shown has been humbling. Over the past week we have seen shops open, people come to work, taxis transporting people across the city's ruins. We have seen makeshift hospitals and relief stations. Yes, there have been some security incidents, particularly around food distribution, but set against the trauma that people have experienced and the scale of their loss, the degree of calm to date has been remarkable. We must build on this resilience and empower communities to deliver. Haiti's people have a right to a better Haiti, a more responsive Government, and a more accountable international community. We need a new social contract.

III.

None of this is going to be easy. No one actor can address the scale or depth of the challenges we face. An effective response must bring together political, aid, police, military and economic partners. Strong coordination *can* be a vehicle to meet this goal.

I say, 'can' not 'will'. Too often coordination is an aspiration that starts and ends in conference halls. Too often, the process becomes the end in itself. Too often coordination produces the lowest outcome rather than the highest impact.

We cannot afford business as usual. Our coordination must be effective, it must be robust, it must be real. This will only happen, if our coordination rests on three pillars.

I. Common outcomes. We must set the objectives that we, the Government of Haiti and partners, seek to achieve today and in the months and years ahead. If we do not set a point on the horizon, we will not stay on the same course.

II. Common challenges. Without a shared assessment of the problems we face, we cannot put in place the strategies to overcome them. Unless we acknowledge this reality, we will not build back better.

III. Agreed principles. We are many partners in Haiti. We come from different cultures and we bring different skills. We speak different languages. To be effective, we need a shared understanding of how we are going to work together. A good example of this is the cooperation between the United Nations Mission in Haiti, MINUSTAH and United States and Canadian militaries. We have established our respective roles: MINUSTAH forces have a mandated responsibility to provide security and public order in Haiti and to support the Haitian National Police. The United States and Canadian militaries are supporting the relief effort, including through escorts, guarding food distribution centres, rebuilding critical infrastructure and managing key access points. We have set out these principles, and we are translating them into cooperative action every day.

The United Nations has been charged by the Government of Haiti to coordinate the massive response to the earthquake. We are committed to do this. Today I am offering a framework for coordination that is based on four key elements.

First, it brings together all response actors in an integrated effort, at the international level, in Port-au-Prince, and in the field.

Second, it is outcomes-driven. But it recognizes that that to achieve them, we need frameworks to task, plan and implement activities together. It offers robust operational mechanisms to do so.

Third, it builds on existing mechanisms. Haiti has been fortunate in its friends. Steadfast regional partners such as Brazil, Argentina and Chile have devoted attention and resources to Haiti over the years. International forums such as the Friends of Haiti and the Group of 11 in Port-au-Prince provide a valuable platform for us to scale up our efforts

Fourth, it puts the Government of Haiti at the heart of a response. We need a strong, respectful and mutually accountable partnership to build national capacity to lead a future, stable Haiti.

No coordination framework will work unless key conditions are met.

Responsible: Each one of us has our part to play in ensuring that coordination works within our own organizations. We in the United Nations are taking bold steps to make our coordination more robust. The Secretary-General has reinforced my authority, as his Special Representative, to deploy all means available to MINUSTAH to support and enable humanitarian operations. We are establishing joint operational arrangements in Port-au-Prince that will bring together humanitarian, military, police and civilians to task, plan and coordinate activities. We will work with others, and we look to others to ensure coherence from the top to the bottom.

Responsive: Coordination will not work if it is not responsive to priorities and needs on the ground. In the past two weeks, support has come from all sides. In the months to come, we will need to more clearly identify priorities and sequence our activities. We must be able to count on the international community to respond to demand.

Resourced: Haiti's needs today are immense. But it is not just a question of more dollars. We need a paradigm shift toward sustained international engagement. We need to commit to a long haul partnership. The allocation of resources can help to lever effective coordination. Or they can undermine it.

I call on each of you here today to commit to the framework for coordination that I, as the Senior Representative of the United Nations in Haiti, am sharing with you today. It is the product of hard work and close collaboration in Port-au-Prince. I ask you for your public support for the proposals we make. This is a chance to put hope back into Haiti. It is a chance to make a stable and developed Haiti more than just a hope.