A shared vision for the UN’s role in Haiti

1. The 12 January earthquake struck at a moment when Haiti was, for the first time in decades, making positive strides towards stabilization and sustained economic development. Today, Haiti is unique as a fragile state facing a combination of post-disaster and post-conflict challenges. Its capital city has been heavily damaged, the majority of the country’s population is highly vulnerable and the environment is seriously degraded. The January earthquake has not destroyed the political, security and economic gains made in the past two years, but it has damaged them and created new obstacles.

2. Yet the devastation caused by the earthquake has also created a unique window of opportunity for the transformation of Haiti, which will be measured by the well-being of future generations. The Haitian authorities are eager to seize this historic moment and ready to enter into a new partnership with the international community. The UN is committed to placing itself at the centre of this new partnership, which should rest on the principles of Haitian leadership and mutual accountability for results.

3. In broad terms, the UN can make its greatest contribution in five key areas:

- Coordinating and enabling the post-earthquake humanitarian relief effort, while working to reduce the risk of future disasters, especially for the most vulnerable; and ensuring a swift and effective response to new disaster;

- Maintaining a secure and stable environment, while working to strengthen the rule of law and respect for human rights through reform of the justice system, and support to Haiti’s police, judicial and corrections institutions;

- Fostering democratic governance through political stability and renewal, and broad-based participation, as well as support to elections and other key political processes, including constitutional reform;

- Supporting the Government in the implementation of its vision for a transformed Haiti, built around decentralization, the strengthening of State capacity and transparency at all levels and the creation of “regional development poles”;

- Supporting the Government to develop the greatest asset of the country, its people, through investment in human capital including education, health and basic social services, and ensuring that social protection, food security, nutrition, human rights, HIV/AIDS and a gender perspective are integrated into programming.

4. None of these areas can be pursued in isolation. Without a secure and politically stable environment, humanitarian relief, recovery and reconstruction efforts cannot take place. Yet enduring stability depends on meeting basic humanitarian needs and improving the living conditions of the population through jobs and better access to basic services. The UN’s approach, which is rights-based, must therefore also be integrated, with all parts of the system working together to reinforce one another.
Supporting the humanitarian effort and reducing vulnerability

5. The scale of the humanitarian challenge is unprecedented. In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, the UN put in place a range of mechanisms to strengthen coordination among actors providing humanitarian aid and engaging in recovery and reconstruction. These measures have contributed to ensuring that the basic needs of those affected by the disaster are met, although there is clearly room for improvement. Humanitarian needs will increase, not decrease, in the coming months, as the rains and hurricane season hit an already vulnerable population. The UN will work with its partners to support the scale-up of humanitarian operations, improve the coordination of humanitarian aid and strengthen the capacity of Haiti to respond to the present and future crises.

6. A critical part of the task will be to promote durable solutions for the displaced in camps and host communities, helping to strengthen local coping mechanisms, limit dependence on humanitarian aid and ensure that the displaced are able to make informed decisions about their future. Efforts are ongoing to link humanitarian assistance to reconstruction, ensuring that settlements are built in safe locations and able to withstand the next hurricane season. At the same time, the UN will also ensure that disaster risk reduction remains a central part of recovery and reconstruction efforts, and to strengthen the capacity of the population to withstand economic, environmental and social shocks.

Maintaining a secure and stable environment and strengthening the rule of law

7. With the support of key partners, the United Nations has been able to fulfill its primary function of maintaining a secure and stable environment, while providing direct security support to the ongoing humanitarian effort. On current estimates, the additional 2000 troops and 1500 police authorized by Security Council 1908 (2010) will enable the UN to provide an overall security presence, and assist the Haitian National Police (HNP) in maintaining public order, with an emphasis on protection of the civilian population, including vulnerable groups. As part of this approach, through community outreach measures, the UN will engage vulnerable and unstable communities in slums and tent settlements, including providing income generation opportunities and promoting constructive engagement of young people.

8. Meanwhile, the UN will continue to assist with the development of the HNP, and facilitate the restoration of the justice and corrections system, within the framework of a holistic strategy aimed at strengthening the rule of law, respect for human rights and gender sensitivity. In doing so, the UN will explore with the Haitian authorities areas where enhanced international engagement may be required.

Fostering political stability and renewal

9. In the aftermath of the earthquake, the Haitian leadership and people have displayed a firm commitment to preserving political stability. A consensus is emerging on the need for elections to take place before the end of the President’s mandate, in order to allow for a democratic transfer of power in 2011. There is also a growing recognition across Haitian society that the constitutional reform process initiated by President Préval must be completed in order to lay the foundations of a new Haitian State.
While it is ultimately for the Haitians to agree on a way forward, the UN stands ready to support the emergence of a new political dispensation and social contract that sets the stage for Haiti’s recovery and long-term reconstruction. To this end, the UN will work closely with the Haitian Government, political parties, private sector and civil society to foster a consensus on governance arrangements, including constitutional reform, while continuing to assist in the preparation and conduct of free, fair and inclusive elections as soon as technically feasible. To this end, the UN will work closely with relevant Haitian authorities and international partners to thoroughly assess the financial, technical and logistical challenges associated with the organization of the elections. In doing so, the overall objective must be to move beyond the status quo towards a genuine transformation of Haitian political life comprising current and newly emerging political actors.

**Implementing the Government’s vision for recovery and reconstruction**

The Haitian Government has given a clear indication of its commitment to “building back better”. Although the Government’s vision is still taking shape, a consensus seems to be forming around three key themes: a) decentralization; b) strengthening of State capacity at all levels; c) the establishment of “development poles” in the regions and d) disaster risk reduction and regeneration of the weakened natural environment. The UN stands ready to actively facilitate and support the planning and design and implementation the Government’s vision, building on the needs articulated in the PDNA. The UN is also committed to assisting the Government of Haiti in the coordination of recovery and reconstruction aid, support to local authorities, and the implementation of key development programmes.

**Investing in the people of Haiti**

The UN will continue to support efforts to create the conditions for private investment, while promoting a balanced social agenda that takes into account the needs of the most vulnerable, and contributes to the achievement of the Millenium Development Goals. Haiti’s most valuable resource is its people. To invest in the human capital of Haiti, the UN will support the development and implementation of fundamental policies of social protection, including universal access to primary education and healthcare. The cross-cutting issues of social protection, human rights, HIV/AIDS, and gender equality will be mainstreamed in all programmes.

**Guiding principles for action**

In its efforts to deliver on these objectives, the UN will:

- Fully support Government leadership, directing resources towards building its capacity in consultation with the Government, and be fully transparent to it and the Haitian people;
- Deploy capacity to the extent possible away from Port au Prince, in line with Government priorities for deconcentration and decentralization;
- Promote a thematic and geographic division of labour among international and national actors, based on comparative advantages and mutual accountability;
- Delivering as one, by strengthening UN system integration, in line with respective mandates;
30 March 2010

- Support a transformation of the Haitian state, during which the international community gradually reduces its own presence as the capacity of Haitian institutions increases.

Approved by Haiti IMTF Principals’ Group
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