

## **THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S PRESS ENCOUNTER ON HAITI**

**New York, 18 January 2010**

SG: Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you know, I visited Haiti yesterday for six hours, and I have just briefed the Security Council on my visit to Haiti.

I saw vast destruction and vast need. Haiti needs immediate and urgent support, and it requires a massive response from the international community.

From my conversations with people on the street yesterday, I heard a clear message from them. They said: We need the United Nations. We need jobs. We need food and water.

Help has been arriving. More is coming in. But for those who have lost everything, I know that aid cannot come soon enough.

So my visit had two aims:

First, I wanted to help ensure the coordination of the huge amount of aid that is pouring into the country.

Second, I wanted to stand with the people of Haiti and our United Nations staff during this time of profound need.

Two challenges stand out: First, to unplug the bottlenecks. We need to make sure that our help is getting to people who need it, as fast as possible. I encourage all donors to liaise closely with WFP [World Food Programme] and OCHA [Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs].

The second and most important challenge is coordination. MINUSTAH [the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti] and key bilateral troop-deploying countries have agreed on a clear division of responsibilities for security and humanitarian support. We are working to make sure that humanitarian coordination arrangements are as strong as possible.

To advance all of these goals, I recommended that the Security Council raise the number of UN police officers in the Mission by 1,500, or 67 per cent over current levels. I also recommended that the Security Council boost the number of troops by 2,000, a nearly 30 per cent increase for six months.

The heartbreaking scenes I saw yesterday compel us to act swiftly and generously, today and over the longer term.

The Haitian people need to see that today is better than yesterday. They need to believe that the future will be better than the past.

That is our universal responsibility. It must be our global commitment.

Thank you very much. I will be ready for only two questions, because I have a Town Hall meeting with my staff.

Q: What is your personal experience? What was the most emotional scene that you have seen?

SG: I went to Haiti with a very heavy heart, as you may imagine. The situation is dire and overwhelming. The whole country, the whole city, has been devastated. It is unprecedented. It is one of the largest, most serious natural disasters in recent decades.

For the United Nations, again, it was the single biggest loss in the history of this organization. That really compounds everything, and I was having very mixed feelings. While we saw signs of hope by retrieving, rescuing people - our staff and other civilians - still we are not sure how many people are still under the rubble without knowing their fate. There is a huge humanitarian need [to] which we must respond. Therefore I was very saddened by what I have seen.

At the same time, I saw from the faces of the Haitian people that they were remarkably calm and patient and trying to overcome their difficulties and they were very grateful to the international community.

Q: Did you discuss the possibility for the UN to take the lead in coordinating, because we saw over the weekend that the Americans were returning to head on the airport? Did you discuss?

SG: As I said, this is the most important issue at this time: how to coordinate by delivering aid effectively and coherently and without any waste, and without wasting any time and humanitarian assistance. The international community supports the United Nations to take the leading role as a coordinator. There is no doubt, and no question about that. The UN will continue to do that, and we will try to have a mechanism established in a more structured way.

Q: Doctors Without Borders was building over the weekend an inflatable hospital. What steps is the UN going to take to make sure, at least at the airport, that these type of needed facilities can get in?

SG: There is an overwhelming situation - bottlenecks - in airport facilities and road conditions and delivering food aid. The US Government has been assisting the Haitian

Government with control tower equipment. As you know the control tower has been damaged while the runway was okay. Therefore the United Nations is very closely coordinating with the US authorities to have a smooth operation, and I am grateful that the United States Government has been swiftly and effectively dealing with this, in close coordination with the United Nations. Mr. Edmond Mulet has been very closely coordinating with the US ambassador and other key donors at the airport.