

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
REMARKS AT PRESS CONFERENCE**

Port-au-Prince, 17 January 2010

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen.
Thank you for joining us.

First of all I would like to briefly read my remarks and these remarks will be translated and the translated version will be distributed to you.

There will be consecutive translations, from English to French, when it comes to Questions and Answers.

I would like to make very brief remarks because you may have many questions.

Immediately on arrival I had a good meeting with [Haitian] President [René] Préval. As you may know the Vice-president of the Spanish government, who was visiting here, participated in the capacity of Spain's presidency of the European Union.

I then visited the remains of the UN/MINUSTAH [headquarters at the Christopher Hotel together with you. You have all seen this very tragic devastation of the UN Headquarters. I was very much impressed by all the hardworking search and rescue teams. And I was told immediately after my departure [from the site] that we had a small miracle. A UN staff, who has been trapped under the rubble for longer than five days, was rescued safely. I am very glad that it was a great sign of hope. Saving lives is our first priority and I hope that we see more such miracles.

We drove through Port au Prince to the Champs de Mars.

It is one thing to see from afar the images of Haiti's destruction and also see them closely. That's a very different experience for me.

That is why we are here: to stand with the people of Haiti.

I am here to say: "We are with you. You are not alone. Help is already arriving."
For a small country like Haiti, this is a tsunami-like disaster. This is a major catastrophe and a huge humanitarian crisis, whose full dimensions we may not even know yet, particularly outside the capital. It requires a correspondingly massive response and help.

Humanitarian organizations are being challenged in some unique ways, particularly on the logistical side when the capital city has been so badly affected and basic systems are not yet operating.

Let me briefly outline three priorities.

First, saving lives.

We are still in search and rescue phase. We have 27 international teams at work with more than 1500 rescuers. This is very moving. People are still alive under the rubble. We need to dig them out, again including cities and towns outside the capital.

Second, emergency relief.

People need food, water, medicine, tents. We are beginning to get it to them. The World Food Programme, (WFP), has already started their operation. And yesterday they fed 40,000 people. The number of people WFP is going to assist will soon increase to one million people within fifteen days and two million people within another fifteen days. The Red Cross and many NGOs are playing their full part too.

Third, and most important, coordination.

I have been emphasizing the importance of coordination among countries and NGOs and international workers. The situation is overwhelming. And the offer of assistance is also very moving and overwhelming.

The airport has limited capacity. We need to make sure our help is getting to people who need it, as fast as possible. We can not waste one minute, one dollar, or one person. We cannot have vital supplies sitting in warehouses.

That requires strong and effective coordination by the United Nations, and between the United Nations and the other major players, particularly, of course, the US – all this under the leadership of the government of Haiti, who are increasingly active.

In fact, President Préval also raised the importance of a coordinated way of delivering assistance. And I assured him that the United Nations will take charge of the leadership in coordinating this situation.

I am gratified that, in spite of the immense tragedy that has befallen the Haitian people and the personnel of MINUSTAH, the mission is ably performing its mandate to assist the Haitian government in maintaining peace and security in Haiti.

MINUSTAH continues to enjoy the fullest support of the Security Council for its role which will be discussed in the Council tomorrow.

I am going to report to the Security Council on the situation and on my visit and how the international community is addressing and assisting the Haitian people tomorrow morning.

I am also grateful for the support of the United States and Canada, who have deployed to Haiti to assist in the delivery of much needed humanitarian aid. They recognize the primary

responsibility of the Haitian authorities to respond to the disaster and the role of the United Nations in coordinating the international assistance.

We are strengthening our coordinating mechanisms with all the actors involved in this challenging task so that it is clear about the different roles and the military personnel of the individual states will have during this emergency.

Under the experienced leadership of Edmond Mulet, the acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Kim Bolduc, the United Nations has already put in place the key sectoral coordination arrangements between UN and non-UN actors – the so-called clusters, including in the neglected but vital area of protecting the position of the most vulnerable in a crisis like this, particularly children, women and girls. We have to protect the human rights of all those vulnerable people in this time of crisis.

I wish to thank and offer my great respect and admiration to all the members of the international community who have come to Haiti's assistance.

I would like to particularly recognize those on the ground working tirelessly to save lives and deliver relief to those in need.

I will not be able to recognize all the countries by name, but I am expressing my most sincere gratitude to all these countries and peoples.

They represent groups and major donors the world over: for example, the Red Cross, Save the Children, international NGOs and aid organizations, too numerous to name. And of course they represent the entire constellation of the UN family—WFP, UNICEF, UNDP, WHO and others.

Again, on behalf of the people of Haiti, and the United Nations, I thank you.

And I promise this:

People around the world expect that their generous contributions will reach those in need, promptly and effectively.

We will do our best, under these very difficult circumstances.

Let me close with two messages, one for our UN team, the other for the people of Haiti.

First, to our colleagues here in Port au Prince and elsewhere: You have lost treasured colleagues and dear friends.

You have suffered yourselves in this gravest single tragedy in UN history.

Yet you carry on. You are the best.

We do not have to create UN heroes. We have only to look around. There are many heroes. I am proud to serve with you.

Finally, I would like to say a few words to the people of Haiti:

Chères Haïtiennes, chers Haïtiens,

Permettez-moi, tout d'abord, de vous exprimer mes sincères condoléances.

L'évènement que vous venez de subir est tragique et, comme vous, ici, à Port-au-Prince, je pleure de valeureux collègues et amis.

J'ai tenu à être ici, parmi vous, à vos côtés, pour vous exprimer ma profonde solidarité et mon plein soutien.

Je sais la douleur que, chacun et chacune, vivez en ce moment.

Le grand désarroi, dans lequel se trouvent les personnes touchées de plein fouet par cette catastrophe.

Mais, pour citer l'écrivain haïtien Monsieur Laferrière, « lorsque les repères physiques tombent, il reste les repères humains », sachez que le monde entier est à vos côtés.

Les Nations unies entreprennent tout ce qui est en leur pouvoir pour vous venir en aide.

Tous les moyens sont mis en œuvre et notre personnel travaille d'arrache-pied pour coordonner les secours et vous prêter assistance.

Vous avez, certes, perdu des êtres proches, des membres de votre famille, des amis, des voisins... mais votre légitime souffrance doit également faire place à l'espoir. A très haut niveau, la communauté internationale se concerte activement pour définir un vaste plan de reconstruction de l'Haïti de demain.

Dans cette épreuve et dans les défis qu'elle apporte, les Nations unies vous tiennent la main.

Mesdames et Messieurs,

Je vous remercie de votre attention.

Mwen menm, comme Secrétaire Général Nations Unies, map fè tout sa mwen kapab pou mwen aide pèp Haïtien. Nou mèt konté sou mwen ansanm avek tout komunoté international la.

Mwen avek nou ak tout kè-m.

Mesi anpil

Q: Mr. Secretary-General, when we were at the hotel, you were approached by a woman whose husband was still trapped inside there and she felt like the work wasn't going fast enough, that there should be more teams on that hotel, and she was also sort of worried about nationalism, she sort of said she sort of felt that the American teams were looking for Americans, the Chinese teams were looking for Chinese, and then leaving. Can you address those concerns by those people at that site?

SG: That's what she appealed to me. I know that there are still many people trapped under the rubble, both Haitian and international staff here. The situation is just overwhelming and I know that there is no difference between, lives, between Haitian, local, national and international. It seems to be that a number of rescuers are simply too [few] and their reach is too much limited. I hope that we will be able to rescue all of them as soon as possible. I also told her that I will try to coordinate with the 27 rescue teams so that they first of all expedite their activities to rescue, and also try to be more balanced in rescuing lives.

Q: [translated from Creole] The United Nations launched an appeal for assistance, and we have reached US \$250 million, and we would like to know where we are right now, in terms of assistance to Haiti.

SG: Yes, last Friday we launched an urgent flash appeal for the amount of US \$562 million. The response is very positive and very moving. I know that that will not be enough. That is what we need [in] the coming six months. We will have to evaluate and assess the situation. I know that we will work together with my Special Envoy for Haiti former [US] President Bill Clinton to look for this mid-and-long term reconstruction of Haitian society. That is what we will work together as our first immediate assistance when recovery activities are over.

Q: Mr. Secretary-General, you said that the United States has recognized the role of the United Nations in managing the coordination of the relief effort, but sometimes our people here on the ground say that it's a bit confusing and one can't really tell whether the United States military is running the show, or the United Nations. Is the United Nations really in fact up to running the coordination efforts, and might it not be a good idea at this point to ask the Security Council tomorrow to perhaps authorize a temporary increase in the number of blue helmets here to sort of you know help things move along?

SG: Effective and coherent coordination at this time will be very important. The United States and the United Nations are very closely coordinating in addressing this issue. I have been discussing this matter with [US] President [Barack] Obama and other senior government officials of the United States, and the United States is supporting the United Nations, taking this coordinating role as a lead international organization, there is no doubt about that. There is – there needs to be – some division of work in fact. There is no such question over who is running the show alone. All members of the international community are very closely coordinating. For example rule of law and security on the streets of Haiti are now being taken by the [Department of] UN Peacekeeping Operations, while even the United States military they are now assisting the humanitarian needs. There is clearly an assisting role, and there is, you should understand that all international actors – United Nations and United States and all other members are here to assist the Haitian government. This is the Haitian government and Haitian people, and the

Haitian government has their own sovereign priority. I have discussed this matter with President [René] Préal, and I have asked him to provide, to let us know, what their sovereign priority will be while we are here to assist the Haitian government.

Q: [translated from French] First he thanked you for the assistance the United Nations has brought, saying that those journalists who have been going around have seen the most affected places, saying that they have seen the helicopters, they have seen the planes arriving, they have seen the assistance coming to the airport, but they are worried because they have not seen the food being distributed, they have not seen the water being distributed. How would that coordination that you mention work?

SG: I know that many people are frustrated and they are losing their patience. This is a difficult situation for everybody, not only the Haitian people. Of course this is very tragic and very difficult and very frustrating to all Haitian people who have been affected, and it is also very difficult for international workers and governments who have to organize in such a short period of time. In dealing with such huge loss of life and magnitude of devastation just requires some more time, some more patience. This is just the fifth day after the earthquake hit the country, and I believe that first of all in terms of stability, peace and security are well maintained on the streets, and deliveries are now being made in a more effective and efficient and coordinated manner. This coordination will improve as we are better organized.

I have put the best people in the United Nations office here, MINUSTAH [United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti] including Mr. Mulet, and I have added one more Deputy Special Representative, Mr. [Tony] Banbury, and I have brought together with me this morning many more staff who will stay here, and this number of staff will increase, as other international donor countries will also increase their workers here. Therefore you may expect that this coordinated mechanism will improve.

Q: You said that in one month you would be able to feed two million people. Don't you think this is too late to avoid riots in the streets?

SG: We will try our best. First of all, I sincerely hope and appeal to the Haitian people to be more patient. We do not want to see any such things. We do not want to even imagine that kind of situation. I have seen, and I have met many people on the street in front of the Presidential Palace. They are appreciative of the help of the international community, and they are appreciative of the United Nations. From their faces, and from my conversations with them, I saw that they are committed. They are looking for the better future. And I delivered a message of hope to them, and I told them that I am here to give them hope, and to bring them a better future. Now, feeding two million people within a month, that is a really big challenge. Just imagine providing daily food to two million people. I know that the number of people who have been affected is about one third of Port au Prince. Therefore I think that will be quite significant a number the UN can provide daily food assistance. Of course, we will assess as time goes by, and if there is anything more needed, we will try to adjust accordingly. Thank you very much.