THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
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REMARKS AT MASS IN REMEMBRANCE OF THOSE WHO DIED IN HAITI

Holy Family Church, New York, 20 January 2010

(Brief Questions and Answers follow)

Your Excellency, Archbishop Migliore,
Father Robbins,
Your Excellency Ambassador Léo Mérorès of Haiti,
Excellencies,
Dear Colleagues and Friends,

As many of you know, we meet here every year in September, at the opening of the General Assembly, to pray for world peace.

It is my sad duty to be here today on a very different occasion:

To remember and mourn those we have lost in Haiti, and to pray for those who are suffering in the aftermath of the earthquake.

Haiti has lost tens of thousands, of its people.

Hundreds of thousands of people have lost their homes.

Haitians have proven their resilience many times.

They are showing that same, extraordinary resilience and sense of solidarity today.

For the UN, it is the gravest single tragedy in the history of the Organization.

Nearly 50 of our colleagues have lost their lives and still many are not accounted for.

Yet, the United Nations is carrying out its work.

We know that the dearest wish of our fallen colleagues is for the United Nations to carry forward the noble mission they have left for us to finish.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Secretary-General's Remarks to Press
Preceding the Service at Holy Family Church, New York

Q: What is your message to the people of Haiti who are desperate for any news?

A: I know this is a very difficult challenge, and difficulty, and I was in Haiti last Sunday. I have seen for myself how difficult it was for people. Now, this tragedy can be turned into an opportunity for the Haitian people. All the international community is standing behind the Haitian people. I was impressed by the resilience and determined will of the leadership of Haiti, President Préval, the Prime Minister, and most importantly, the people who are united. And together, with the international community, I am sure that we will overcome this tragedy. The United Nations will continue to coordinate with the international community to provide the necessary humanitarian assistance. At this time, we have three priorities: first of all to provide security, second, we will continue to provide humanitarian assistance. At the same time, and more importantly, we have to discuss how we can reconstruct Haiti, and the Haitian economy.

Q: Mr. Secretary-General, why has help been so slow to come to Haiti? The people are crying out. They are desperate.

A: I know in the initial few days there was some delays, but we have now built up very effective mechanisms to unlock and unblock these bottlenecks. We have established five land corridors. We have improved the airport facilities. Now, we have introduced priority slotting systems so whoever, and whatever humanitarian assistance is coming, they will be given priority. Now we are going to have some port improvement facilities, and with a great support from the United States government. I have discussed with President Obama, and Secretary Clinton, most recently, and they are now trying to provide temporary port facilities, which will greatly lessen the bottlenecks.

Thank you.