

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

--

**REMARKS TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON HAITI
New York, 22 January 2010**

Madame President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ten days after the earthquake in Haiti, the scale of the disaster has become clear.

According to Government estimates, at least 75,000 people have been killed, 200,000 were injured and 1 million have been displaced. But of course, we do not yet have a complete tally.

Search and rescue teams — more than 50 from around the world — have spent the past week looking for survivors. At last count, they had rescued 123 people alive from the rubble. The search continues.

As many as half the buildings in parts of Port-au-Prince may have been destroyed or damaged. Towns to the southwest of the city have seen even greater destruction.

Food, water, medicine, and shelter are all in short supply. Three million people need help. Two million people require food assistance. One million people are homeless.

The Haitian authorities have been very hard hit. Most ministries have been destroyed, as has key infrastructure, including electricity and water supplies.

Schools were destroyed, as were prisons. More than four thousand prisoners escaped from the National Penitentiary in Port-au-Prince.

The UN itself, as you are all acutely aware, suffered its single greatest loss of life in the history of this Organization.

As of yesterday, 70 UN staff had perished; 146 were as yet unaccounted for. These include many national staff whose whereabouts we are still trying to determine. But we must expect that the death toll will continue to rise.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In responding to Haiti's immense needs, the United Nations has three priorities:

First, the humanitarian relief operation.

Coordination and logistics are crucial. We must work even more closely with our partners — Governments, NGOs, relief organizations and, of course, Haitian authorities.

Second, security. Without it, there can be no effective humanitarian relief effort, or basis for reconstruction.

That is why I am grateful that Member States have responded so quickly to our appeal for additional police and soldiers.

Third, the future. In the coming weeks and months, we will need to shift from emergency response towards longer-term relief and recovery.

We must help the Haitian Government to reconstitute itself. We must help restore basic services and revive the economy. And we need to turn disaster into opportunity.

Our response has been swift and we have made progress on all three objectives.

Despite suffering devastating losses, MINUSTAH troops and police have cleared main roads, removed bodies and conducted patrols with the Haitian National Police, which is gradually recovering from its own losses.

As of today, the security situation in Haiti remains stable. The United Nations is playing the principal coordinating role, working with the Government of Haiti in ensuring security. Incidents of looting and unrest remain the exception, despite some news reports to the contrary.

MINUSTAH's military component is closely cooperating with U.S. and Canadian forces.

I am also grateful to the Troop Contributing Countries from Latin America—including Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay-- and other regions for their spontaneous response to the request for additional troops and police for MINUSTAH.

I have instructed my Special Representative to ensure that all available assets are put to work in support of the humanitarian effort.

Member States from all regions have also generously contributed relief supplies, sent in personnel and deployed troops.

The United States, in cooperation with the United Nations, is managing the airport; UN staff from our relief agencies are helping to prioritize landing slots for humanitarian flights.

The seaport of Port-au-Prince is being repaired and is operating again, at limited capacity.

A humanitarian corridor connecting the affected areas to the Dominican Republic is becoming a major staging area for assistance. We are grateful to the Dominican Republic for their great assistance.

As a result, food distribution has now reached half a million people, and is being scaled up to reach 2 million people over the coming weeks.

Drinking water is reaching at least 200,000 people per day.

Eighteen permanent health facilities and temporary field hospitals are now operating, as well as a medical ship sent by the United States.

Last Friday, a Flash appeal for \$575 million was launched to cover 3 million people for six months. So far, \$334 million has been contributed and pledged. This includes \$25 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), which would not have been possible without the 60-plus Member States that have already contributed to the CERF this year.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am proud of the United Nations' response. Seldom in the face of such a disaster has the international community acted in such solidarity, nor so quickly in the face of so many difficulties.

That said, despite all our best efforts, too many people have not received the assistance they urgently need.

The immediate priorities continue to be medical assistance, water, sanitation, food and shelter, as well as fuel and transportation equipment to support the relief operation.

I urge Member States to make additional contributions to the Flash appeal.

At the same time, we need to set our sights beyond the immediate emergency.

Before the earthquake, Haiti was making progress. Thanks in large part to MINUSTAH, it was enjoying a new measure of political stability. The economy was growing and investors were coming into the country.

From afar, it might look as though all that progress has been lost. But that is not so.

Handled properly, this disaster may offer us an opportunity to build back better, as the UN Special Envoy Bill Clinton has put it.

We not only need to restore government, we need to improve governance.

We not only need to rebuild the police and the justice system; we want to help them become a better police and more capable justice system.

We not only need to rebuild factories; we need to create the right environment for investors to build more factories and create an export system that takes full advantage of the opportunities for new growth.

Among these is the tariff-free market opening to the United States under existing HOPE legislation.

And we need to provide jobs ... not only to those who lost their jobs last week, but to the millions of Haitians who did not have a job in the first place.

The people of Haiti are not looking for handouts.

During my recent visit, I met many ordinary people on the street. Yes, they needed food, water, medicine. But beyond that, they told me, they need one thing above all else – jobs.

They want to work and rebuild their lives. They want to work to rebuild Haiti. They want a future that offers stability ... dignity ... hope.

We have a concrete plan to help.

Right now, we are seeking \$41 million through a UNDP Flash Appeal to support a program we call ‘Cash for Work’.

We want to scale that up. Imagine what can be done with a ‘Cash for Work’ programme two or three times that large – or more.

This is a programme to help Haitians help themselves.

By paying them to remove debris from the streets ... to do demolition and reconstruction ... to help deliver aid and construct camps for the homeless.

The cost is \$5 per person per day.

With \$5 per day, a worker can take care of his or her family.

That money will begin to circulate through the economy, supporting small businesses and banks.

This money will stimulate the economy and give Haitians hope. It will create more jobs.

Jobs like this are the social concrete and mortar that will hold Haiti together in this time of extreme stress.

Yesterday, President Clinton and I agreed that he would do his utmost first, to mobilize support and funding for this effort and for others aimed at meeting Haiti's urgent needs ... and second, to help lay a firm foundation for Haiti's longer-term future.

As he said at our meeting: handled properly, we have an opportunity to help Haitians reinvent their country.

I urge you to do your part. Haiti's recovery must begin with its people — strong, resilient and impatient to get to work rebuilding their lives and their country.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To succeed, on all these fronts, we need a clear and concrete sense of gaps and needs.

That is why I have directed our UN agencies to work with the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and others to begin an immediate Post Disaster Needs Assessment.

A number of Member States have called for a reconstruction conference. A preparatory meeting will be held in Montreal, Canada on Monday.

I have asked Under-Secretary General [John] Holmes of the Office of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the UNDP Administrator Helen Clark to attend this important gathering.

Haiti has never been more in need.

I thank you for your efforts on behalf of the people of Haiti, and for the adoption of today's resolution.

Thank you.