

**Remarks by Alonzo L. Fulgham,**

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Good morning! Bonjour! Prime Minister Pierre-Louis, Dr. Moïse Dr. Lauredan, distinguished colleagues and friends of Haiti, I am honored to be here today and I thank you for the opportunity to join this gathering.

This is a very fitting forum for the subject I want to address today-the critical need to find new ways to work more effectively, together, to bring about lasting change in Haiti.

The United States enjoys many ties with Haiti, and as a member of the community of democracies, we are committed to helping the Haitian people and their democratically-elected government build a more prosperous nation and a brighter future.

U.S. assistance programs currently work to strengthen governance; improve security and stability; foster economic growth; provide basic education and health services; improve access to affordable food; and reduce disaster vulnerability.

This year, the United States will provide over \$300 million dollars in assistance to directly support the national development priorities identified by the Government of Haiti.

We want to work with you-our partners in the Haitian Diaspora-to work faster, harder, and smarter to advance sustainable development in Haiti.

As some of you may know, I began my career in international development as a Peace Corps volunteer -from 1984 to 1986 -- in Haiti. In those early years I worked closely with my Haitian partners in civil society and government, and had the opportunity to travel around the country to provide credit and assist entrepreneurs in developing local handicrafts for export. From Jérémie to Jacmel to Cap-Haïtien, I was impressed then, as I continue to be today, by the talent, creativity, and most importantly-the resolve of the Haitian people to tackle difficult challenges and overcome the obstacles that limit Haiti's future.

But last year, just when it seemed the country was poised for a strong performance on the economic front, rising food prices and four back-to-back storms set back plans and progress-yet again.

In many parts of the country, work had to begin anew on roads, schools, and restoring Haiti's agricultural productivity. All of this amounted to a \$900 million dollar blow to the Haitian economy.

We are all here to answer the same question -- How can we work together to overcome such a huge setback?

Clearly, a renewed and concerted effort from the Haitian government and its international partners is required to regain the hard-earned progress lost to man-made and natural disasters, and to lay the foundation for sustained economic growth.

To that end, the United States Government has responded with additional emergency funding of 166 million dollars for relief, recovery and disaster mitigation programs.

Working closely with the Government of Haiti and other donors, these programs are designed not only to provide recovery assistance in the short-term -- but also to build the country's long-term capacity to respond to future disasters.

Although still fragile, Haiti's security has improved to the point where the country can focus more of its attention and resources on long-term economic growth. And while our focus must remain on the longer term, let me assure you that our government is possessed by a sense of urgency in our efforts to spur economic development in Haiti. For instance, we will be supporting Haitian plans to take full advantage of the passage of the HOPE II trade provisions by Congress, which are designed to increase employment in Haiti.

With your help, we must explore creative and innovative initiatives to increase both domestic and foreign investment flows to create urgently needed jobs throughout the country. This is vital-not only to maintain continued stability in Haiti, but also to provide opportunities to the hard working Haitian people to mold a better life for themselves and for their families.

In our view, job creation is central to long-term growth. This is an endeavor that will require all of our concerted efforts - and all of our persistence and ingenuity.

In the United States Government we recognize that we, too, need to learn to work together. The ongoing policy review launched by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton will help set the parameters and direction of our assistance, and will better align all of our activities with the government's national development plans.

For the first time in my memory, we have a true whole-of-government approach to Haiti's development. To underscore that point, our government recently sent out an inter-agency team to Haiti. Headed by USAID, the team included experts from the Departments of State, Energy and Agriculture.

Among other principals, our team met with the Prime Minister and worked side by side with representatives from each of the ministries. They traveled extensively throughout the country with public officials and leaders from the private sector, exploring areas and sectors where the United States Government ought to concentrate its efforts. Our team continues to maintain a dialogue with the Government of Haiti as they prepare their recommendations.

To further reinforce this message, I will travel to Haiti as soon as I leave you today to continue our ongoing dialogue with the Haitian government and with leaders from the business community and civil society. My trip will also underscore that our government is firmly committed to assisting the people of Haiti to achieve the economic prosperity to which they so fervently aspire and so assuredly deserve.

It is abundantly clear that our collective investments must be focused on helping Haiti to move beyond assistance to genuine economic growth.

As President Obama stated in his speech in Accra, "the true sign of success is not whether we are a source of aid that helps people scrape by - it is whether we are partners in building the capacity for transformational change." In essence - "Real change".

Few countries have developed fully without the active involvement of their diaspora. Take Israel, for example, where the active involvement of the diaspora community has contributed not only to that country's economic growth but also to forging a strong and unshakable bond between our nations.

As members of the Haitian Diaspora, I ask you to continue to play a partnership role in achieving transformational change for Haiti.

Let me offer a few examples of how that might happen.

Last week, the U.S. Agency for International Development launched a Haitian Diaspora Marketplace program, providing \$2 million to support investments by members of the Haitian Diaspora in small and medium enterprises in Haiti. The goals of this program are to spur economic growth, create sustainable jobs, and support productive investments in the Haitian economy. This program is implemented in partnership with one of the leading banks in Haiti, the Sogebank Foundation, and is designed so that you, members of the Haitian Diaspora, can participate in funding investment projects in Haiti in manufacturing, tourism, agriculture, construction, information technology, and other areas.

USAID's Mission in Haiti has also launched a project to harness the potential of remittance flows for investment purposes such as savings accounts, collateral for business loans, education loans and scholarships.

In the months ahead, USAID intends to be at the forefront of efforts aimed at making the Haitian Diaspora an even more active participant in the strategic economic development of Haiti. We see you as a unique and valued partner, with many comparative advantages to offer.

Your contribution to Haiti is seen not only in the remarkable level of remittances that are sent to Haiti each year, but also in your active support for efforts to strengthen good governance in Haiti through advocacy.

I see great promise in Haiti today and I believe that we are witnessing a moment of enormous opportunity. The stars are aligned. In our government, we have a President, a Secretary of State, and a Congress who are deeply and passionately committed to Haiti's long-term development.

And we are seeing that commitment echoed on the international stage as well, particularly through the appointment of President William Jefferson Clinton as UN Special Envoy.

Perhaps most importantly, Haiti is experiencing a period of relative stability, headed by a democratically-elected government committed to rebuilding its future.

Members of the diaspora, the time is now.

We need your help to:

- \* Continue to let Haitian officials at the local and national levels know that you expect stable and capable government institutions;
- \* To join forces with NGOs in the fight against corruption; and
- \* Perhaps most fundamentally, to make your invaluable expertise and experience available to government and civil society organizations in Haiti.

The Government of Haiti and its people have met many challenges during the last year. And it is thanks to the leadership of the Haitian government, the indomitable will of the Haitian people, the generous spirit of the Haitian Diaspora, and the cooperation of the international donor community that Haiti now stands stronger.

The United States looks forward to continuing to work with the Haitian Diaspora to bring meaningful economic development to Haiti. As the old Creole proverb goes: "Men anpil chay pa lou." Many hands make the load lighter.

Mèsi anpil. Thank you.