

March 18, 2010

Your Excellency,

On the occasion of the Donors' Conference on Haiti, we, organizations from around the world, call on your government to make human rights the guiding principle of international assistance to Haiti.

We applaud the generosity and commitment of the international community to provide assistance to the Haitian people in their greatest time of need. Care, however, must be taken to ensure that assistance respects the human rights and dignity of all Haitians.

Too often, in Haiti and around the world, recipients of assistance have been treated as victims deserving of charity, rather than individuals entitled to human rights. They have been excluded from decisions affecting their basic rights to food, medical assistance, water, and housing. Assistance has often responded to donor priorities, instead of the needs of the recipient government and people.

At the Donors' Conference, we urge the international community to overcome the mistakes of the past and to adopt a human rights-based approach—which requires empowering the Haitian people, strengthening the capacity of the government to sustainably guarantee human rights, and making assistance accountable and transparent to the Haitian people—for all assistance to Haiti.

### **Empower the Haitian People to Build a Stronger Haiti**

The international community should focus on empowering the people of Haiti as rights-holders. It should require a high degree of active, free, and meaningful participation, in project development, implementation, and monitoring, from the entire spectrum of Haitian society, including local communities, civil society and community-based organizations, rural populations, internally displaced people, and women. Participation will enable Haitians to directly engage in the rebuilding and development of their country and ensure assistance responds to their needs.

The Donor Conference should guarantee that assistance projects will:

- Be Haitian-led and community-based at every stage of the process, including through the United Nations clusters. The bulk of the work—and salaries—should go to Haitians.
- Prioritize the rights of the poorest and most vulnerable groups, including women, children, the disabled, the elderly, and internally displaced persons.
- Provide, where non-Haitian leadership is absolutely necessary, positions for Haitians and invest in training to develop national capacity to perform those functions.

### **Strengthen the Haitian Government's Capacity to Guarantee Human Rights**

All international actors should focus on strengthening Haiti with a government that has the resources it needs to guarantee human rights to all Haitian people. Donor states, NGOs, and the United Nations should partner with Haitian government ministries to fortify and expand a public

infrastructure that ultimately belongs to the Haitian people. At every stage of assistance, donor efforts should be coordinated by and with the government of Haiti.

At the conference, the international community should commit to:

- Work directly with the Government of Haiti to identify needs and to develop, implement, and monitor programs to sustainably provide basic public services, including education and public health, water, and sanitation services.
- Provide, to the fullest possible extent, assistance in the form of budgetary support to the Government of Haiti.
- Encourage all non-governmental organizations operating in Haiti to coordinate with the Government of Haiti and other agencies.

### **Make Assistance Accountable and Transparent to the People of Haiti**

To ensure accountability to the Haitian people, the international community should commit to transparency at the international and local levels and to redress for problems with assistance. Information on all phases of developing and implementing a rescue, recovery, and rebuilding strategy should be made accessible to Haitians from all sectors of society. Progress and obstacles alike should be made public. A complaints system should be put in place to ensure that when things go wrong or human rights are violated, redress is available, no matter the identity of the perpetrator.

With this in mind, the donors at the Conference should commit to:

- Fund a mechanism, established together with the Government of Haiti, to: (1) deliver information about assistance projects to the Haitian people; (2) measure, monitor, and make public the outcomes of assistance projects at the community level; (3) provide a mechanism for Haitians to register complaints about problems with project implementation. This mechanism should be administered by the Government of Haiti in partnership with civil society and community-based groups.
- Comply with the International Aid Transparency Initiative and Paris and Accra principles for all assistance to Haiti.
- Coordinate all assistance through a Multi-Donor Fund that incorporates the Government of Haiti and representatives of Haitian civil society and community-based organizations as voting members of the governing committee.
- Create a public web-based database, through a Multi-Donor Fund, to report and track donor pledges, disbursed funds, recipients, sector areas, expected outcomes, and project status.
- Report publicly and regularly on disbursement of funds and progress and problems with project implementation in a manner accessible to the Haitian people.

Ultimately, all international assistance should aim to provide concrete, durable improvements in the lives of the Haitian people and for human rights in Haiti. Donors should take this opportunity to implement aid in a rights-based way to substantially better the human rights situation in Haiti. International donors should ensure their partner non-profit organizations also follow this framework, incorporating human rights principles into projects and coordinating assistance efforts.

With assurances of our highest regard,