

Haiti: Ban challenges donors, investors to create 100,000 jobs

14 April 2009 –Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today called on donor nations, investors and other “friends of Haiti” to create at least 100,000 jobs in the impoverished Caribbean nation in the next two years.



“I firmly believe that Haiti is poised to make more progress over the next two years than it has made in the past two decades,” Mr. Ban **told** a major donor conference hosted by the Inter-American Development Bank in Washington.

Reasserting that the country is now at a turning point, a message he has been stressing since his visit there last month, he added that “for all of us, this is the moment, a break-out moment, to help one of the poorest nations lift itself toward a future of real economic prospects and genuine hope.”

Haiti's leaders have presented a plan for the country's recovery, and “our responsibility, here today, is to help translate this plan into action,” the Secretary-General said on the second day of the two-day gathering.

During his trip to Haiti, in the company of former United States President Bill Clinton, “we saw deep poverty and much human misery, but we also saw a great opportunity,” Mr. Ban said, citing Haiti's numerous benefits, such as its “talented and hard-working people” and its leaders' commitment to democracy and human rights.

The country stands a better chance than almost any emerging economy, not only to weather the current economic storms but to prosper, because of new US trade legislation, Mr. Ban has been affirming since his visit.

HOPE II, as the act is known, offers Haiti duty-free, quota-free access to US markets for the next nine years for the textile industry. “No other nation enjoys a similar advantage,” the Secretary-General **said** in an opinion piece in The New York Times following his trip. “This is a foundation to build on.”

During his trip to Haiti, in the company of former United States President Bill Clinton, Mr. Ban said that he saw reason for hope that the country will break out of its cycle of poverty, but warned that sustainable social and economic development were essential to for that to happen.

Security has improved and crime rates have dropped, he elaborated today, noting that he was able to walk through the notorious Cite Soleil slum that had previously been ruled by violent gangs.

Also in today's statement, he noted that educational initiatives are sending eligible Haitian children to college and many are staying in the country and not contributing to the “brain drain” that plagues developing countries that offer little opportunity.

He credited the work of the Haitian people and their Government, the UN Stability Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), the UN country team and the wider international community for bringing about this progress.

To lock in the gains, however, he said that the Government requires additional short-term technical and financial assistance.

Last summer's storms have left \$1 billion – equivalent to 15 per cent of Haiti's gross domestic product (GDP) – of damage in their wake.

The global recession has further eroded the country's socio-economic situation, with remittances, which bring three times the amount of funds to Haiti as international aid, plummeting 14 per cent.

He asked all “friends of Haiti” to work with the Government and the private sector to create jobs and spur economic growth by taking full advantage of openings to international markets.

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Image: Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (right) with former US President Bill Clinton in Haiti on 10 March, 2009