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Haiti has best chance in decades for development – UN envoy Bill Clinton



Former United States President and new UN Envoy to Haiti Bill Clinton

15 June 2009 – The new United Nations envoy on Haiti, Bill Clinton, today laid out his vision to advance development in the small and impoverished Caribbean nation, stressing that, more than ever before, the country has the opportunity to advance.

“Haiti, notwithstanding the total devastation wreaked by the four storms last year, has the best chance to escape the darker aspects of its history in the 35 years that I have been going there,” Mr. Clinton told a [news conference](#) at UN Headquarters in New York.

Mr. Clinton joined forces with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to help Haiti when they visited the country in March to raise awareness of efforts to help its people and Government bolster their economic security.

“No one is better placed for this mission,” Mr. Ban, who appointed the former United States president to the UN post last month, told reporters. “He knows the country. He loves the people. They love him. This is the strong wish of the Haitian people and the Haitian Government and myself as Secretary-General.”

Mr. Ban stressed that Haiti is at a “turning point,” adding that it has a real chance for stability and potential prosperity.

Mr. Clinton said that what he wanted to do first is to follow the plan Haiti has set out for its recovery and its future. “All I want to do is help the Haitians take over control of their own destiny. It’s all I have ever wanted for Haiti.”

This involves several elements, the first of which is to support the Government in the implementation of its programme “Haiti: a new paradigm,” to generate new jobs and enhance the delivery of basic services.

Haiti is the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere, with an annual estimated gross domestic product (per capita) of \$390. In addition, 78 per cent of Haitians live on less than \$2 per day and 54 per cent on less than \$1 per day.

Mr. Clinton, who previously served as the UN Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery after the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake, said another important element is to assist the recovery effort in Haiti with the same fervour that was brought to the tsunami nations to 'build back better.'

It is also vital to focus on disaster prevention and mitigation, he added.

"We know from experience in other places we can do a lot to mitigate disasters and we can do a lot in Haiti. We're about to face another storm season without that kind of mitigation and I don't want to go another year without it."

The new envoy also plans to encourage more private sector investment in Haiti, and to make Haiti more competitive to attract such investment.

He also wants to encourage donors to honour the commitments they have already made at a pledging conference in Washington, D.C. in April. "We also want to do everything we can to make sure that these donor commitments are aligned as closely as possible with the Haitian programme we have been given."

Mr. Clinton said another area he will focus on is dealing with the energy crisis and accelerating what is being done in the area of clean energy.

"We believe there's a lot of economically viable opportunity yet untapped for clean energy and also for energy efficiency, particularly in manufacturing facilities and in the way the homes, and the schools and the hospitals and the public buildings that have to be rebuilt are rebuilt.

"I hope that in the process of doing all this, we will continue to elevate awareness of both the pain and the promise of Haiti in the international community, and there are real genuine economic opportunities there," he stated.

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