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Ban asks former US President Clinton to take leadership role in Haiti quake relief



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (right) meets with William J. Clinton

3 February 2010 – Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today asked former United States President Bill Clinton, already deeply involved in Haiti before last month’s devastating earthquake as United Nations Special Envoy to the country, to assume a leadership role in coordinating international quake relief, from emergency response to reconstruction to launching a new funding appeal.

“Needless to say, he has hit the ground running; he will be in Haiti on Friday,” Mr. Ban **told journalists** after he briefed the Security Council. “In particular, he will provide strategic guidance in our work for Haiti’s early recovery and long-term reconstruction, with a special emphasis on mobilizing international support and donor funding.”

International efforts to help the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere after the 12 January quake, which killed up to 200,000 people, injured many others and left 2 million in need of aid, have faced a series of daunting challenges compounded by the enormity of the catastrophe and the lack of infrastructure in providing sufficient food, shelter and other requirements.

The two men met at UN Headquarters in New York this morning and agreed that one of the most urgent needs right now is shelter with the storm season just months away. "Important as they are, tents alone will not suffice," Mr. Ban said.

"In meeting this and other needs, we agreed that we must move as urgently as possible to develop a clear strategy that mobilizes all UN agencies and their partners, including national governments, NGOs (non-government organizations) and the private sector," he added.

Mr. Clinton will work together with UN Development Programme (**UNDP**) Administrator Helen Clark and Mr. Ban's Special Representative Edmond Mulet. Mr. Ban asked Mr. Clinton to launch a revised flash appeal on 17 February to carry the humanitarian effort for the entire year. The original appeal launched on 15 January sought \$562 million, with the bulk going to immediate needs, including food, water and shelter.

Overall the situation in Haiti is largely calm, Mr. Ban said. "Food distribution is growing smoother by the day, and we have now reached about 1 million people. Banks, markets and schools are beginning to re-open," he added.

Mr. Ban appointed Mr. Clinton UN Special Envoy for Haiti last May, following a visit they made together two months earlier to raise awareness of efforts to help its people and Government bolster economic security.

The inter-governmental International Organization for Migration (**IOM**), which is coordinating the provision of shelter, estimates that 1.1 million people are displaced. Aid agencies have already distributed 10,000 family tents and more than 11,000 tarpaulins, while a further 15,000 tents are in stock and more than 40,000 should arrive in the coming days and weeks, IOM said.

On food distribution, the UN World Food Programme (**WFP**) has scaled up its operation with the first systematic food distribution programme using coupons, which started this weekend. The agency has now reached almost 1 million people since the quake struck, with more than 300,000 gaining access through the new distribution system in the last 72 hours.

WFP's emergency operation has now been extended until the end of 2010 and is likely to cost over \$800 million, more than double the initial budget. "The world has saved many lives in Haiti through an enormously generous and fast response to WFP's food and logistics appeal," Executive Director Josette Sheeran today said today. "The humanitarian lifeline is now reaching millions of destitute women and children in Haiti. We are very grateful."

UN Children's Fund (**UNICEF**) Executive Director Ann M. Veneman was leaving today for the Dominican Republic on the first stop of a visit to Haiti, as the agency launches a massive immunization campaign aimed at reaching 500,000 children under the age of seven.

She will arrive in Port-au-Prince, Haiti's capital, tomorrow and spend the day with children in the city and visit an immunization centre for measles, diphtheria and tetanus, all of which can be deadly in times of crises. She will then return to the Dominican Republic, where UNICEF is working to supply Haitian relief efforts.

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