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Haitian reconstruction the focus of talks between Ban and UN envoy Clinton



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (right) and UN Special Envoy for Haiti Bill Clinton speak to reporters

21 January 2010 – Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and United Nations Special Envoy Bill Clinton today stressed the need to help get the Haitian economy back on its feet as soon as possible in the aftermath of last week's devastating earthquake, as emergency humanitarian assistance continued in the hardest-hit areas.

The UN Development Programme (**UNDP**) has already employed almost 400 Haitians to give the local economy a boost and swiftly deliver urgently-needed humanitarian aid following the 7.0-magnitude quake, which struck Haiti on 12 January.

By week's end, the cash-for-work programme will be expanded to include another 700 people to remove rubble and bring essential infrastructure, such as electricity, back online.

"It's really important to try to continue to get the immediate emergency aid up to scale," Mr. Clinton, who serves as UN Special Envoy for Haiti, **told reporters** following a meeting with Mr. Ban at UN Headquarters.

"The cash-for-work programme is the next step," he said. "It's really important to give young people something positive to do and a lot of people there want to be a part of rebuilding their country."

The quake is estimated to have affected one third of the 9 million citizens of Haiti, already the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere.

Mr. Clinton and the Secretary-General, both of whom have visited the capital, Port-au-Prince, in the wake of the disaster, stressed the need to get people back to work as quickly as possible.

"Through this cash-for-work programme, we can employ many young men and women who can really devote themselves to the early phase of recovery," said Mr. Ban, urging generous support for the \$41 million appeal launched by UNDP to support the cash-for-work programme.

The Secretary-General added that he is sending Emergency Relief Coordinator John Holmes and UNDP Administrator Helen Clark to Montreal to attend a ministerial conference on Haiti next Monday. In addition, the UN, together with the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and the European Commission, are planning a post-disaster assessment mission for reconstruction purposes.

In a related development, the **World Bank** announced today that, due to the crisis caused by the earthquake, it is waiving any payments on Haiti's \$38 million debt to the Bank for the next five years. At the same time, it is working to find a way forward to cancel the remaining debt.

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