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UN envoy Bill Clinton hopeful for Haitian recovery after devastating quake



A Haitian boy receives treatment at an ad hoc medical clinic at MINUSTAH

14 January 2010 – In spite of the catastrophic earthquake which struck Haiti earlier this week, the United Nations Special Envoy for Haiti, former United States president Bill Clinton, expressed confidence today that the impoverished Caribbean nation can still secure a brighter future.

One third of Haiti's 9-million strong population is believed to have been affected by Tuesday's 7.0 magnitude earthquake, which has devastated the capital, Port-au-Prince, with buildings having been leveled and basic services on the brink of collapse.

Mr. Clinton wrote in an **opinion piece** in today's Washington Post that those pinned by rubble must be found and that the bodies of the dead must be taken away from the streets.

"But what Haiti needs most is money for water, food, shelter and basic medical supplies to bring immediate relief to those who are homeless, hungry and hurt," he stressed, echoing the **call** issued by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon yesterday for stepped-up international support to help victims of the deadly tremors.

The number of casualties wrought by the earthquake is unknown, and it was announced today that 36 UN employees have died, with nearly 200 others – including Hédi Annabi, the Secretary-General's Special Representative – still unaccounted for.

"As we clear the rubble, we will create better tomorrows by building Haiti back better: with stronger buildings, better schools and health care; with more manufacturing and less deforestation; with more sustainable agriculture and clean energy," Mr. Clinton said.

During his first visit to Haiti, the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation, in 1975, he said he was struck by its "persistence of hope among its people in the face of abuse, neglect and poverty."

Mr. Clinton said that he accepted the position of UN Special Envoy for Haiti last May to help put into place a long-term plan to boost development to create jobs, increase education levels and improve healthcare, among other things.

"We made a good beginning, and before the earthquake I believed that Haiti was closer than ever to securing a bright future," he said.

"Despite this tragedy, I still believe that Haiti can succeed."

Some 3,000 of troops and police serving with the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) are in and around Port-au-Prince, and are helping to maintain order and assist in relief efforts. They have also started to clear some of the capital's main roads to allow aid and rescuers to reach those in need.

The UN is rushing its experts and supplies to Haiti, as well as pre-positioning an airplane, to be operational by tomorrow, to shuttle UN and humanitarian agency staff between Miami and Port-au-Prince.

The Secretary-General has dispatched Edmond Mulet, his former Special Representative to Haiti and current Assistant-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, to Haiti to assume full command of the UN mission.

In addition, Mr. Ban ordered \$10 million to be released from the Central Emergency Response Fund (**CERF**) to kick-start humanitarian relief efforts. A flash appeal for Haiti is expected to be launched within the next few days.

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Ban calls for international support in wake of devastating Haiti quake