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UN seismologist outlines efforts to improve Haiti's earthquake preparedness



UNDP seismologist Eric Calais (right) with Haiti's Interior Minister, Paul Antoine Bien-Aime (left), and UNDP's Jessica Faieta

18 April 2011 – The lack of earthquake risk reduction is a major gap in Haiti's development efforts, considering its vulnerability to major seismic events, a leading quake expert working with the United Nations Development Programme ([UNDP](#)) in the Caribbean country to help build its preparedness capacity said today.

“When the next earthquake hits Haiti we have to be sure that the country is prepared,” Eric Calais, a UNDP seismologist, told reporters at UN Headquarters.

“Haiti cannot afford being as poorly prepared as it was on 12 January 2010,” said Mr. Calais, who was brought in to work with UNDP after the Haitian Government asked for UN support to develop earthquake risk reduction capacity.

Last year's quake, which had a magnitude of 7.0 on the Richter scale, killed more than 200,000 people, injured at least 300,000 and displaced 2.3 million people – nearly one quarter of the country's population. It levelled Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, and delivered a severe blow to the country's already fragile economy and infrastructure.

Mr. Calais said that UNDP disaster risk reduction, working with the Haitian authorities has been able to determinate the magnitude of the ground movement in future earthquakes in the country. A map showing how susceptible different parts of Port-au-Prince are to seismic movement has

also been produced, a tool that will make it possible to plan more resilient buildings in the reconstruction effort. Such information will soon be available for urban centres, Mr. Calais said.

With UNDP support, Haiti is also in the process of obtaining and operating a seismic monitoring network, which will help authorities gather information on earthquakes for better decision making.

UNDP is working with Haiti's interim reconstruction commission to include disaster risk reduction in the overall rehabilitation strategy, Mr. Calais said.