

January 20, 2011

DPI/NGO Briefing

“ Disaster Relief and Preparedness:
Haiti, A Year Later”

Thursday, January 13, 2011, 10:15 AM - 12:15 PM

1. Background Information:

On January 12, 2010, a massive earthquake struck Haiti, reducing much of the country including its densely populated capitol, Port-au-Prince, to rubble. It was the worst earthquake in the region in more than 200 years as well as the worst disaster ever confronted by the United Nations. The magnitude 7.0 earthquake delivered a severe blow to the country's already unstable economy and infrastructure.

The United Nations Secretary-General stated at the time that the earthquake inflicted further suffering on people who have already borne far more than their share of life's injustice. Poorly constructed buildings and shanties were destroyed or seriously compromised including 3,000 schools. Crushed buildings from the earthquake still spill out onto sidewalks today.

A study by the Inter-American Development Bank has estimated that the total cost of the Disaster was between 7,2 billion to 13,2 billion dollars, based on a death toll from 200,000 to 250,000 people. The death toll was later revised by Haiti's President to upwards of 300,000 people.

The situation was further exacerbated with the outbreak of cholera as confirmed by the Government of Haiti on October 21, 2010. The Ministry of Public Health has reported that as of January 1, 2011, the outbreak has resulted in 3,651 deaths.

Cholera medicine and other medical supplies are urgently needed to strengthen the response to cholera at the same time that the country's reconstruction efforts continue.

2. Moderator:

Ms. Maria-Luisa Chavez; Chief, NGO Relations,
Department of Public Information (DPI)

3. Speakers:

Mr. David Carden; Acting chief of the Americas, the Caribbean, Central Asia, Europe and the Middle East (ACAEME) Section of the United Nations office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and Chief of OCHA's Early Warning and Contingency Planning Section.

Mr. Bruno Lemarquis; Chief, Central Strategy and Policy Cluster,
United Nations Development Program

Ms. Denise Brown; Senior Donor Relations Officer,
World Food Program

Ms. Taina Bien-Aime; Executive Director, Equality Now

4. The moderator, Ms. Maria-Luisa Chavez welcomed everyone and introduced each of the speakers with their backgrounds. She indicated that they have put together a panel of experts who are familiar with the situation in Haiti to examine the current state of affairs there, nearly a year after the catastrophic earthquake of January 12, 2010.

5. The first speaker, Mr. David Carden, Has served with the United Nations in various capacities since 1993 in Cambodia, South Africa, Sierra Leone Balkens, Georgia, Lebanon and New York. He spent one month in Haiti during November/ December, 2010. He outlined his organization's work in helping the earthquake victims in Haiti and what they will continue to do there.

6. The second speaker, Mr. Bruno Lemarquis, a French national, holds a degree as an "Ingenieur en Agriculture des Regions Chaudes" from the Center National d'Etudes des Regions Chaudes in Montpellier, France. He has worked for UNDP since 1992, and has always been associated with issues related to crises prevention and recovery.

He has worked in the field for UNDP in Cambodia (1992-1996), the Palestinian Territories (1996-1998), Haiti (1998-2002) and Somalia, where he was the Country Director for UNDP from 2006-2009. He has also served at their New York Headquarters from 2002-2006 as senior advisor for crises countries in the Arab States region. Prior to joining UNDP he also worked for NGOs in Haiti, Ethiopia and Cambodia (1986-19910. Me. Lemarquis was deployed to Haiti in the immediate aftermath on the earthquake as part of UNDP's surge support.

In his presentation he expanded on Md. David Carden's listing of planning what else are needed for our response to the Haitian earthquake and their recovery. Many NGOs that are there are playing critical roles in helping the Haitian recovery. He emphasized that we all need to work together to help the people there to overcome this tragedy. The main priorities for 2011 are working with organizations like the Red Cross. We must strengthen ties with governments like the United States and come together to overcome this disaster.

The top priority and challenge is job creation. We need to move ahead. The United Nations has set up many partners for this relief effort. What are needed now are leadership by all to help the Haitian people regain their normalcy from this disaster. He detailed how twenty organizations in the United Nations are working with many organizations to overcome this disaster. In 2011, the main focus are to support the leadership in the solution of this disaster.

7. The third speaker, Ms. Denise Brown, is currently the New York based Senior Donor Relations Officer under the Government Donor Relations Division of the United Nations World Food Program (WFP). A Canadian national, Ms. Brown holds a Masters of Science degree from Purdue University and a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of British Columbia.

Her current portfolio focuses on overall strategies and policies with regard to United Nations common funding, particularly within the humanitarian sphere, funding structures and funding in post-conflict/transition situations.

Before joining the WFP, Ms. Brown worked in Haiti for PACT International and the United Nations Office for Project Services from 1994 to 1998. She was based in Cambodia from 1992 to 1994 with Enfants du Cambodge, and in Iraq as a field monitor for the WFP in 1998. From 1999 to 2002, Ms. Brown served as a Program Officer on the Afghanistan operation, as the Emergence Coordinator for WFP in Kenya during the drought in the Horn of Africa between 2006 and 2007 and as the Head of the Refugee Operation in Kenya from 2002 through 2006.

She was the Deputy Country Director for Somalia from 2007 through 2009. Ms. Brown also served as a member of the operations team deployed to Haiti immediately following the earthquake in January of 2010 and was also deployed to Pakistan following the floods there in August, 2010.

Ms. Brown explained how a year ago she went to Haiti and what she saw and her feelings. Her organization have made over thirty recommendations to help the Haitian people. The major problem is how they can distribute food in areas where everything was destroyed. They had to identify a number of NGOs who came there to help the people. The NGOs came from everywhere to help. She detailed how her organization met with NGOs there to work out the problems.

One year after the earthquake, they are solving the problems there and reaching two million who are affected by the disaster. Her estimates are that 2.3 to 3 million Haitians were affected. They have distributed a thousand pounds of rice to them. The organizations there have positioned food in thirty-three different locations for the people. The most important part of their effort was coordination.

8. A film was shown of the Haitians immediately following the disaster. Individual children spoke of their problems arising from the disaster. The film also showed the tragedy of the homes destroyed. The disaster left 1.5 million people to wander and try to find help.

Sexual violence against women and children are now a major problem. Police there because of their personal losses have not been able to cope with the problems. Night patrols are helping. The displaced families are now living in tents. They are warning the women not to leave their children alone. The women there know that they and their children are at great risk.

9. The fourth speaker, Ms. Taina Bien-Aime holds a law degree from the New York University School of Law and a license in Political Science from the University of Geneva Graduate School of International Studies in Switzerland. Before attending law school, she was a Program Officer at the African American Institute.

Prior to joining Equality Now in 2000 as General Counsel she was Director of Business Affairs and Film Acquisitions at HBO from 1996 to 2000 and practiced international corporate law at the Wall Street law firm, Cleary, Gottlieb, Steen & Hamilton from 1992-1996.

For close to two decades Ms. Bien-Aime has provided expert commentary on women's rights for numerous national and international media outlets including the New York Times, AP, Reuters, CNN, NPR and The Amanpour Show. Ms. Bien-Aime is also a contributor to The Huffington Post and has published legal articles and essays including in "Becoming Myself: Reflections on Growing Up Female" edited by Willa Shalit (Hyperion, 2006).

She indicated that after a year after the earthquake there is still little to celebrate. She asks where has the money donated gone? Why do one and one-half million people have to live in rubble and tent cities? Ms. Bien-Aime stated how as a child she used to walk with her mother on Sundays. Now no one there walks like that. The rule of law was never for women there. Since the disaster it has gotten much worse.

She gave many examples of gang rapes of women and children and the lack of the Haitian government support of women and children. She feels that political will is needed there. There is a lack of coordination of efforts there. Education is needed in all their communities. She hopes that the second anniversary of the disaster see help and support for these people.

10. Questions/Answers:

10.1 Mr. David Carden; The coordination of both the government and military there presents a great challenge.

10.2 Ms. Denise Brown; The problem is that is a political challenge. She worked with information officers to come up a plan.

Questions/Answers (Cont'd):

10.3 Mr. Bruno Lemarquis; His organization works very closely their staff there on the issue of sexual violence.

10.4 Mr. David Carden; The Haitian military and police are now the camps and this has helped.

10.5 Ms. Denise Brown; Food being sent there are targeted for both the schools and the camps.

10.6 Ms. Denise Brown; She indicated that they can provide a list of the schools where food has been distributed.

10.7 Ms. Denice Brown; She indicated that they must set up an organization with NGOs and others there who are coming to help.

10.8 Mr. Bruno Lemarquis; He stated that they must coordinate policies for all who are coming to help. NGOs must become partners with the government on the ground.

10.9 Mr. David Carden; Humanitarian coordination are important there. We must determine how NGOs are coordinated.

Ms. Maria-Luisa Chavez; Coordination of the mechanism are important to bring NGOs there to work together,

10.10 Mr. Bruno Lemarquis; He indicated that they will work get the information out to all organizations and individuals coming to help.

10.11 Ms. Taina Bien-Aime; A number of organizations on the ground there are working to help women cope with sexual violence. What is needed are more coordination. Women there are isolated. Governments must put pressure on the Haitian government on this issue of sexual violence.

10.12 Ms. Denise Brown; She indicated that they have one hundred partners from Asia who are now helping.

10.13 Mr. David Carden; The first line of response is important. We need more coordination. He gave examples of coordination in other areas and why it was important.

PDC George Weinstein
National UN Chairman