

Our Commitment to Haiti

In every nation's history, there comes a turning point—a moment of opportunity in which the people can choose to build a better future for themselves and for the generations that follow; a moment in which they commit to work hard to realize that future, together.

For Haiti, that moment has come. After 200 years of oppression, poverty, and neglect, the people are dedicated to re-imagining and building what they want their country to be—a nation that finally reflects their desires and their dreams.

This moment was building long before the earthquake on January 12, 2010. After a series of hurricanes had ravaged the nation in the late summer of 2008, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon asked me to serve as his Special Envoy, working with the Haitian government, the business sector, NGOs, the Haitian diaspora, and the Haitian people themselves, to build a more modern economy, better infrastructure, and stronger health and education systems.

At our fourth Annual Meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative in September of 2008, I had asked our members to commit what they could—resources, investments, donations to NGOs, or assistance on the ground—to help Haiti build back better. The response was enormous. We left that meeting with more than \$100 million in pledges from all sectors and regions toward projects that ranged from new bridges to cleaner energy. One such commitment made by Concern Worldwide US and the Jolie-Pitt Foundation secured financial support to rebuild three schools in Saut d'Eau and six schools on La Gonâve. One year later, 1,428 children—more than half girls—began class in the new structures, built to comply with “hurricane safe” building standards. In fact, these schools withstood the earthquake, and children are already back in the classroom.

In October 2009, after I became the UN Special Envoy for Haiti, we hosted more than 500 investors from Latin America and around the globe in Port-au-Prince to acquaint them with the opportunities for investment in Haiti. Many left the meeting with new commitments to grow and expand their businesses there or start new ones. In addition, thousands of NGOs were working to give people the tools they needed to lift themselves from poverty. All of these activities were com-

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mitments with a sweeping development plan adopted earlier in the year by the Haitian government.

Then the earthquake happened, and our focus necessarily shifted to meeting the staggering emergency needs—food, water, shelter, sanitation, health, rescue, and recovery. The outpouring from governments and private citizens was immediate and generous, enabling relief agencies to quickly mobilize and save countless lives. But it was clear that the reconstruction would require long-term and sustained commitment to enable Haiti to recover from this latest, and largest, in a

long list of disasters, and continue on its path to a prosperous, sustainable future.

Only days after the earthquake, we again turned to our CGI members to reaffirm their existing commitments and forge new solutions that would transcend business as usual. Through our Haiti Action Network, we initiated working groups to help organize our members' strengths and capacities, including health, business and investment, education, water, culture, technology, energy and housing. I have been heartened by how many organizations have stepped up to take on the immense challenges in each of these areas. Today we have mem-

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bers working to construct affordable temporary and long-term shelter; provide legal advice; distribute emergency kits; train workers in masonry techniques; build mental health systems; increase exports of mango, rum, and coffee; support entrepreneurs; restore cultural and historical landmarks and digitize libraries; transport materials; expand access to clean water, hygiene, and latrines; teach children and families financial literacy; establish a National Institute of Teacher Education; and create small and large-scale lighting solutions with clean energy.

I am proud to work alongside these members and the international community, along with Haitian Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive, as the co-chair of the Interim Haiti Reconstruction Committee (IHRC). The IHRC is working to coordinate recovery projects in ways that reduce duplication, ensure transparency, and align all of our efforts—government, NGO, and private sector—with the priorities set forth by the government of Haiti, in their modified development plan.

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In the pages to come, I'll let our members speak more in depth about their experiences, the lessons they've learned, and the work ahead. I'm so pleased *Innovations* has opened up its pages to us to tell a story in the making—with the goal of a happier ending for the people of Haiti.

At this year's Annual Meeting, we'll be focusing on what more must be done and how CGI members can use their innovation, their resources, and their expertise to move Haiti forward. We'll be talking about what we've done well and what we can do better. But most importantly, we'll take action to translate these lessons into tangible results in the future.

CGI is proud to stand with the people of Haiti, today and for as long as it takes to get the job done. There is a new Haiti on the horizon, and if we work together, with the urgency and the creativity these challenges demand, with the model of collaboration and partnership CGI provides, a new tomorrow is possible.