

HAITI NEEDS US FOR THE LONG HAUL

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After the catastrophic earthquake of January 12 which took untold lives and devastated their nation, the people of Haiti must once again face down tragedy and rebuild their nation. We, along with many nations in the world, have responded with magnificent generosity. Millions have internalized the words of President Obama and responded that our “common humanity” compels us to do what we can to help the Haitian people. As we watch the images of the aftermath of a disaster where attempts to alleviate untold suffering are hampered by poor infrastructure, we become frustrated but we cannot become discouraged. There is so much pain and suffering that we may be tempted to wring our hands and lament the fate of the Haitian people and feel that we can do little to respond to such overwhelming need. Nevertheless, we must act and with a sustained commitment to help.

Reports estimate that approximately 3 million Haitians, one-third of the population, have been directly affected by the earthquake. Earthquake survivors need clean water, food and shelter. Many need a wide range of medical attention from antibiotics to prevent infections from spreading to surgery to repair crushed bodies. Orphaned children need care. The needs are basic but the long-term solution must be comprehensive and we all need to do our part. National and international institutions have begun this process. President Obama has pledged sustained assistance to support the recovery of Haiti. The House of Representatives passed House Resolution 1021 by a vote of 411 – 1 which, among other things, supports calls to suspend the debt Haiti owes to international institutions and calls for a process to cancel this debt. The Department of Homeland Security has suspended deportations to Haiti and has granted the Temporary Protected Status of Haitian nationals who are in the United States. Foreign ministers, approximately 12 regional and western European nations, met in Montreal, Canada and agreed to a 10-year commitment of assistance to Haiti.

In order to ensure that our national institutional pledges are met, we must reach out to both the Administration and Congress to make known our support for these actions and commitments and to make clear that we expect the government to act expeditiously on such pledges. Even after news of the Haitian earthquake can no longer be found on our front pages, we must make the effort to keep up with news of Haiti. We must make known our dismay that those in need of the medical care readily available in the United States are not allowed access to such care and are at risk of falling victim to political disputes about who pays. We must and can help the valiant people of Haiti who from the beginning of their nation have fought against both the tyranny of man and nature by doing all we can to help, not just in monetary

pledges but with all our available skills and resources. Here are some resources that provide suggestions on how we can begin:

1. [Contribute online to the Red Cross](#), or donate \$10 to be charged to your cell phone bill by texting "HAITI" to "90999"
2. uscis.gov
3. charitynavigator.org

Find more ways to help through the [Center for International Disaster Information](#).