

Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ursula Mueller – Remarks at Member States Briefing on the Humanitarian Situation in Haiti

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As delivered

[OPENING REMARKS]

Excellencies, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to chair this event today on the humanitarian situation in Haiti.

Allow me first to introduce our distinguished speaker, Dr. Mamadou Diallo, the United Nations Deputy Special Representative, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in Haiti.

He will share with us his reflections on the humanitarian situation in the country, and his perspectives on the way forward.

We also have the pleasure to be joined by Mr. Willy Louis, Minister Counsellor from the Permanent Mission of Haiti to the United Nations.

Before I hand over the floor, allow me to make a few points.

Our discussion today gives us an important opportunity to focus on the humanitarian situation in Haiti. Haiti has recently been in the news due to sustained protests in several cities, including in the capital, Port-au-Prince. Sadly, the severe levels of humanitarian need in the country rarely make headlines.

This year, 2.6 million Haitians will need humanitarian assistance and protection. And many more are highly vulnerable to shocks, given that nearly 60 per cent of the population live below the national poverty line, in precarious conditions and with limited access to basic services. What does this mean in real terms? It means 320,000 children between the ages of 6 and 14 are out of school. It means over a quarter of the population does not have access to clean water.

Recently, humanitarian partners were called on to step up their assistance to address urgent needs following the protests. This included the request for distribution of fuel, water and medicine to public hospitals, so they could continue to treat the sick.

In short, as noted by a number of Member States in the Security Council just last Friday, humanitarian support is still required in Haiti.

Humanitarian organizations are working closely with the Government, including Haitian line ministries and institutions, to meet these needs. For instance, to eradicate cholera, we work in line with Haiti's National Plan for the Elimination of Cholera. And we are supporting the Haitian Directorate for Civil Protection – the entity responsible for preparing and responding to natural disasters – to train staff and pre-position relief stocks ahead of the upcoming hurricane season, which begins in June.

Humanitarian organizations also coordinate closely with other partners, including development actors who are focusing on building the resilience of communities and reducing vulnerability. Because ultimately, there are no humanitarian solutions to the underlying causes of humanitarian problems – we need wide engagement and collaboration among stakeholders to ensure lasting and sustainable change for the people of Haiti.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Today, Dr. Diallo will present Haiti's Humanitarian Response Plan for 2019, which is part of the multi-year strategy for how UN agencies and NGOs will deliver humanitarian assistance and protection services in 2019 and 2020.

Humanitarian conditions have deteriorated over the last year on several fronts. Hunger levels have increased. And there are persisting needs following the earthquake that struck Haiti in October last year.

While humanitarians continue to deliver assistance to those most vulnerable, the lack of funding represents a massive challenge. Last year, the humanitarian appeal for Haiti was funded at just 13 per cent. This makes Haiti the most under-funded humanitarian crisis in the world.

In order to maximize the impact of limited resources amidst increasing needs, the humanitarian community has more strictly prioritized the Humanitarian Response Plan for 2019. Only the most urgent lifesaving and preparedness activities are included, leaving medium and long-term activities to development programming. This plan asks for US\$126 million to meet the needs of 1.3 million people in 2019. This is half of what we asked for and aimed to achieve last year. The needs are higher, but we simply don't have the funding to do more.

In recognition of these severe funding gaps, the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) provided \$12.1 million to support lifesaving activities in Haiti last year, and the CERF was the biggest donor to the Humanitarian Response Plan. This year, the CERF has allocated a further \$5 million to Haiti.

I want to thank all the donors who generously contribute to the CERF, which has been an invaluable instrumental to respond to unmet needs in Haiti. However, while the CERF provides crucial funding to support lifesaving activities in underfunded emergencies, it cannot replace regular donor funding for the Humanitarian Response Plan.

Colleagues,

Haiti is on the path towards a better future, but this is put at risk if humanitarian needs go unaddressed. The international community has a collective responsibility here – we cannot fail the people of Haiti.

[CLOSING REMARKS]

We have heard from our speakers today about the serious humanitarian situation in Haiti. While progress has been made, for instance in the fight against cholera, many Haitians continue to be deeply vulnerable.

Other epidemics are spreading, as Dr. Diallo shared with us. Many people have limited access to basic social services, struggling every day just to find clean water, or to receive treatment at a hospital. Vulnerable people at the border area require protection services. And this year, more Haitians will struggle to put enough food on their tables.

Much effort has been going into supporting Haitian institutions to prepare and respond to natural disasters. But based on lessons learned from past hurricane seasons, we know more needs to be done. As mentioned by Mr. Louis, contingency stocks need to be pre-positioned and temporary shelters rehabilitated.

In 2018, the hurricane season mostly spared Haiti. But going forward, cyclones are predicted to be more frequent and of higher intensity in the Caribbean region. We must do everything in our power to prepare today. And we saw on October 6th last year that earthquakes continue to be a threat in Haiti, causing significant damage and loss of lives.

I encourage the Government of Haiti to make all efforts possible to strengthen the Directorate for Civil Protection, so it is as prepared as it can be. I take this opportunity to reiterate the support of the United Nations and its partners to the Directorate for Civil Protection and other Haitian institutions, which are the ones leading efforts to alleviate people's suffering.

I also wish to commend the work of the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Dr. Diallo, in advocating for a multi-year approach to the humanitarian response. While humanitarian assistance continues to be required, we can only meet the humanitarian and protection needs of the most vulnerable people by linking with development partners to reduce people's vulnerability and reliance on humanitarian assistance.

Excellencies and distinguished guests,

We can – and we must – do better for the people of Haiti.

Humanitarians are ready to respond, but we need donor support in order to deliver assistance to those who need it most.

I call on donors to come up with the funding for the 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan. Your support will not only alleviate suffering, but it could prevent the situation in Haiti from deteriorating.

Thank you for coming and for your continued support.