

**DRAFT**

**Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief  
Coordinator Valerie Amos**

**Informal briefing at ECOSOC on Haiti**

**14 January 2011, New York**

Mr. President, excellences, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,  
colleagues,

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to brief ECOSOC on Haiti today. You provide great support to OCHA and the UN's humanitarian agencies, and I am looking forward to working closely with you throughout my tenure as Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs.

Haiti has been on all of our minds even more than usual this week. The one-year anniversary of the earthquake was marked in Port-au-Prince and here in New York at exactly 4.53 on Wednesday, when we remembered our colleagues and the more than 200,000 Haitians who lost their lives on 12 January last year. For the humanitarian community, this has also been a time in which the many activities completed over the first 12 months of the response have been consolidated and critically examined. There have been reflections on the many lessons that have been learned about what works - and what does not - when the international community responds to these kinds of mega-emergencies. This has also been a time when we have looked ahead at what must be done in the months and years ahead, because Haiti still needs our assistance.

12 months ago this week in the Haitian cities Port-au-Prince, Leogane, Jacmel and elsewhere we now know that more than 200,000 people died and 300,000 were injured. Almost all UN facilities in the country were destroyed and many surviving staff were coming to terms with terrible personal losses. Critical transport infrastructure including the port, airport, and roadways were disrupted. Many government personnel and facilities were lost. Despite all this, within hours of the earthquake, the relief effort was underway. In the weeks that followed, aid agencies overcame tremendous logistical problems to deliver food, water, healthcare, shelter and sanitation facilities to millions of people in desperate need. This all contributed to saving lives.

One year on, what has this effort accomplished? Some 1.5 million people have received help with shelter. Of those, around half - 800,000 – are still in camps. The rest have been able to return home, or have been provided transitional shelter or another arrangement. I must stress that no-one is suggesting the shelter arrangements are what people would wish for. The so-called camps are for the most part spontaneous sites where people live in very difficult conditions, often amid rubble and mud – as I saw for myself when I visited Haiti recently. However, basic services are being provided in most of these areas. At least five litres of drinking water per person is being delivered to 1.2 million people daily. Over 11,000 latrines have been constructed, providing many people with the first modern sanitation they have experienced in their lives. Over 1.1 million children are receiving daily meals through the national school feeding programme, supported by

the World Food Programme. 68 per cent of damaged schools have been cleared of debris, allowing more than 2 million children to return to school.

The last year has of course been about more than the earthquake response. Several other challenges have emerged which reflect the ongoing difficulties that Haitians face as they struggle to rebuild their lives out of the earthquake's ruins.

In mid-October a suspected cholera outbreak was reported in the Artibonite region, a remote rural area that was not affected by the earthquake. The Government of Haiti initiated a cholera response operation supported by the humanitarian community already in the country. But Haiti had ideal conditions for cholera's spread. Poor and non-existent water, sanitation and healthcare infrastructure in many urban and rural areas. The density of populations especially in the urban slums. And the fact that cholera had not been present in Haiti for over 40 years, meaning knowledge of how to prevent infection was non-existent. Within weeks the outbreak had spread nationwide. Today, almost 200,000 people have been affected and over 3,700 people have died. The overall case fatality rate has declined from a peak of 9 percent to around 2 percent today, indicating that while the infection is still spreading around the country, the treatment facilities and the intensive public information campaigns launched to educate people about how to protect themselves are working.

Just a week after the cholera outbreak was confirmed, another challenge threatened to undo everything that had been achieved in Haiti. Hurricane "Tomas" was

projected to hit Haiti directly, putting hundreds of thousands of people in grave danger, especially earthquake survivors living under plastic sheeting and in tents, and disrupted the cholera treatment and prevention operation which was just getting up and running. The Government and the humanitarian community launched a major effort to warn people about the impending storm. People that could be moved and who wanted to were helped to reach safer areas. Relief supplies were pre-positioned so a relief response could be launched immediately after the storm's passage. At the last minute the Hurricane dissipated and changed course, sparing Haiti its full impact, but the heavy rainfall resulted in seasonal flooding. Nonetheless, this development showed how vulnerable hundreds of thousands of Haitians still are to the natural disasters which affect Haiti every year. The need to "build Haiti back better" must be more than rhetoric. It must be made reality.

Excellences, ladies and gentlemen,

The worldwide outpouring of generosity by individuals, governments, militaries, private organizations and others that started as soon the earthquake hit made an immense aid effort possible that has saved many lives.

The relief effort is still helping millions of people to survive in what remain extremely difficult conditions. Malnutrition, chronically weak health systems, appallingly low literacy rates, and widespread lack of access to clean water, sanitation, and other basic services mean humanitarian assistance is still an essential lifeline for hundreds of thousands of Haitians. Aid agencies are still providing water to more than a million

people every day, food to 2 million people every month and helping to keep 2.2 million children in school. These efforts need to continue at least through this year, which is why we have launched another appeal, this time for \$906 million. From that \$174 million is requested for the cholera response, only 27 percent of this has been provided. So we need to scale up and do more. Much more attention to the cholera response is needed if the improved response of the last weeks is to be sustained.

The relief effort has helped millions of people, but it has not – and will not – provide the long-term solutions which are desperately needed. Accelerating recovery efforts must be the absolute priority for 2011. But even when this happens, it is important to still be realistic about how long it is going to take to get everybody to where they want and need to be. We cannot expect that Haiti, the poorest and least developed country in the western hemisphere before the earthquake, will be rebuilt in one year or even two. Humanitarian agencies are prepared to stand beside the poorest and most vulnerable Haitian people for as long as it takes to recover from this last terrible year, and whatever the years ahead might hold.

Thank you.