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Haiti: Next Steps

By: Gilbert NMO Morris

Recently, (Jan. 28th 2010) on Capitol Hill in Washington DC, an extraordinary meeting took place, at which there was held, the frankest discussions on US Foreign Policy, *carried Live on C-Span*; probably, as there has ever been in public.

Senator John Kerry chaired the meeting, under the auspices of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. Appearing were prominent Haitian-Americans, Volunteer Professionals with longstanding extended experience in Haiti, and agency Professionals, expert in disaster relief and recovery.

During the question/answer period, a robust discussion unfolded turning on two main points:

- a. The extent of the destruction and destabilisation on the ground; together with scope and scale of the recovery and rebuilding phases, including going forward timelines.
- b. Who will “run the show”. That is, whom shall the international community call in Haiti at the head of a chain of command to undertake this work?

The scale of destruction in Haiti is nearly unspeakable. The scope of the impacts of the destruction is unknowable; which is itself instructive, in the sense that one must be ready to admit that it has impacted the very possibility of a country, government and civil society re-emerging in Haiti, without the most extraordinary assistance.

Arguments turned to whether or not President Preval is equipped to lead the recovery effort. I think this is just the wrong emphasis. Presidents do not lead recovery efforts and certainly not one on this scale. In the case of the Marshall Plan in 1948, President Truman authorized it, but Mr. Paul Hoffman of Studebaker Corporation was appointed as Administrator.

I worried about talk of the capacity of the Haitian President as much as Dr. Paul Farmer (UN Special Envoy) did because of the undertones of a second occupation of Haiti; which all thinking people should oppose.

What then is to be done and where should the recovery and redevelopment efforts begin, and proceed in a manner that puts Haiti on a new path?

I always tell my students, the most important thing in a disaster situation is ORDER, AND TO ACHIEVE ORDER, YOU NEED A CHAIN OF COMMAND.

There is a Sovereign government in Haiti. But the government is weak, and largely controlled by the Mulatto class and lacks the resources to deal with the current crisis. If you simply give money to the government, you support and even reinforce the status quo.

However, impose the will of the "usual suspects" (THE US, EUROPE, THE WORLD BANK or THE UN), you undermine the very democracy you intervened to save.

So the objective is to maintain sovereignty, achieve the objectives of order, systems of authority, recovery, clean-up, planning, contracting, mobilisation of resources and labour, implementation and review; all of this aimed at giving Haitians the best chance to re-build their nation and keeping the plunder-happy "Disaster Capitalists" at bay.

This is a serious conundrum, because at last count I noted 3700 separate initiatives that need to be dealt with BEFORE money can be applied.

(Just think: register of deaths, Location for stockpiles of rubble containing remains, EVAC locations for displaced populations, continuing critical care facilities, logistics for food and medical supplies, temporary waste management systems, temporary courts, new land boundary surveys...I can go on...and each of these areas have their own subsets of 10-20 segments, all for 3.5 million people directly and 10 million in general!)

The International community is not going to give the money to the existing government. They are not going to give it to companies that show up all over the world when grant money is available.

As such, there needs to be established the following ASAP:

"The National Haitian Provisional Authority (NHPA)"

This should be made up of a Chairman, a Managing Director and 9 Members.

The Chairman should be an outstanding Haitian, such as the former Prime Minister Michele Pierre-Louis. I do also think Dr. Rony Francois may prove excellent as either Chairman or Managing Director. Members should include Mr. Harold Charles - Distinguished Developer; Seigne Castor – Chairman, Haitian American Association of Engineers; Dr. Jessie M. Colin, Associate Professor in Barry University's School of Nursing; Representative Phillip Brutus, the first Haitian American in the Florida State Assembly; Dr. Guerda Nicolas, Professor of Clinical Psychology at Boston College; Dr Rudolph Moise Founder & President of the Comprehensive Health Center in Miami, Florida; Professor Jean Claude Exulien, Haitian-American Historical Society; Neite Decimus, Anthropologist and Guy-Uriel Charles, Professor of Law, Duke University. These are all distinguished Haitians who are used to authority and standards of excellence.

The Authority should answer to an International Advisory Council made up of The Rt. Hon PJ Patterson former Prime Minister, Jamaica, Chairman; Mitt Romney, former Governor, Massachusetts, Vice Chairman; Sir Courtney Blackmun, former Barbados Central Bank Governor, Member; Maurice O. Glington Distinguished Barrister, Member; Leon Williams, Distinguished Telecoms Executive, Member; The Rt. Hon. Kenny Anthony former Prime Minister of St. Lucia, Member; Mrs. Justice Allen of the Supreme Court of Canada, Member.

Here is the process and the roles:

The Haitian President calls an Extraordinary meeting of his Cabinet. He tables, and seeks passage of a Resolution to invest certain powers in the Provisional Authority. (Since the money to be spent is coming from international grants, and not the Consolidated Fund, there is no transfer of the powers of the Assembly Nationale to tax the public purse. It is for this reason we do not want international loans for Haiti that returns it to yet another spiral of debt).

However, this must include the power to direct State Officers, such as policemen, customs, etc. And to define, align and assign property demarcations and values; control of ports and airports and to call on national resources.

Once the powers are vested, several things follow:

First, the Provisional Authority presents a plan, broken down into the phases above. Second, funding is earmarked to those plans. The International Advisory Council's role is to keep the President of Haiti informed, holding public meetings to put the Provisional Authority to the question concerning process, methods and progress.

This preserves the sovereignty of Haiti; shows respect for the Presidency and the Rule of Law; places the aid funds and responsibility in the hands of capable people and those people answer to an august body of persons, who keep the President informed.

Whatever the solution adopted for moving forward, it must establish a chain of command in the manner discussed above.