

**International Conference on Haiti
Brussels, Belgium**

Keynote Address

Ministers, Excellencies, distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, Mesdames et Messieurs,

I would first like to thank my colleagues from the European Union and Belgium, as well as the Egmont Institute, for bringing us together today to take part in this initiative.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to open this conference, one that could not be more timely given the ongoing challenges in Haiti, and our continued efforts to help resolve those challenges. Today's conference brings together key players in Haiti, people with a profound and personal understanding of that country's past struggles and recent realities.

That this conference is being held in Brussels indicates the level of cooperation between Canada and the EU in addressing common policy priorities. That strategic

partnership is a vital shared asset. Together, the EU and Canada seek to advance our common values and common interests across a variety of sectors.

Less than two weeks after the earthquake, Canada hosted the Montreal Ministerial Preparatory Conference, where participants sketched a roadmap for international coordination in helping with Haiti's long-term recovery. At the New York Donors Conference in March, an unprecedented sum of money, one billion dollars over 10 years, was pledged for Haiti's reconstruction.

Canada's pledge in New York of \$400 million over two years to support the Haitian Action Plan for recovery and development was in addition to its ongoing \$555 million development cooperation program.

In total, Canada's current commitment to Haiti stands at more than \$1 billion.

International support for Haiti was undeniable, as was the commitment to, at long last, rebuild a stronger country.

Many of us were confident that this time, the results would be different, and things would improve for Haiti.

More than a year after the earthquake, international assistance is still needed in Haiti, both in the short-term to meet ongoing humanitarian needs but also over the long-term, to help the country rebuild not only its infrastructure but its institutions and systems.

The needs on the ground are great and the challenges complex. While it takes time to recover from such a catastrophic natural disaster, the Haitian people's frustration over issues such as debris removal, shelter, employment and improved access to quality education is certainly understandable. Despite unprecedented efforts and dedication, progress has fallen far short of Haitians' expectations.

As frustration mounts among Haitians and the international community at the lack of progress and the political situation in Haiti, there is a growing recognition that we have, collectively, failed to help that country realize its full potential.

If we reflect on our efforts over the years, we are faced with certain uncomfortable realities.

After eight UN interventions and billions of dollars spent over more than 15 years, Haiti is still plagued by the same enduring problems, which were only exacerbated by the earthquake: a government with little capacity to manage its operations or deliver essential services to the people; public institutions that lack the confidence of the Haitian people; a dysfunctional political system that all too often overlooks the collective good; and a small but powerful elite seemingly oblivious to the plight of the rest of the country.

These problems indicate that democracy is still a work in progress in Haiti.

Throughout the years, international donors, despite their best intentions, have tended to focus on short-term, quick-impact projects that are easily tracked. This approach was appropriate in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, but one year later, the international community has not fully addressed democracy and good governance as critical drivers of long-term success.

As I mentioned earlier, there is also a certain degree of frustration within the international community. Canada reiterates its call for Haiti's political leaders to fulfill their democratic obligations. They must work to ensure that the electoral process continues so that the democratic transition can be completed as soon as possible.

As Minister Cannon has often stated, the international community cannot rebuild Haiti alone. Political stability can only be achieved by the Haitians themselves, democratically electing an efficient, honest and responsible government to lead the people through the next critical stage of recovery and reconstruction. Time is running out.

The recent political crisis in Haiti revealed how a dysfunctional political system threatens not only the country's short-term stability but also its long-term development and prosperity. This is unacceptable when there is so much work to be done and while millions of Haitians continue to suffer every day.

Political stability and successful democratic transition are critical for Haiti. This means the conclusion of the current electoral process and the establishment of a new, responsible government that will lead the country into the next crucial stage of recovery and reconstruction. It is also this new government with which the international community will collaborate to continue to make progress on reconstruction and rebuilding.

Good governance is intertwined with security, social and political stability and economic development, so it is perhaps of no surprise that progress has been slow. Rebuilding Haiti without addressing fundamental issues like democratic deficit and governance is like building on quicksand.

We cannot expect that Haiti will avoid its mistakes of the past without a fundamental overhaul, not only of Haiti's government structures and institutions, but also of the political culture.

We, the international community, should reconsider our approach. We should focus our efforts on supporting good governance in Haiti, contributing to the strengthening of key

institutions and improving the democratic process, thus ensuring that the will and needs of the Haitian people are served by their political leaders.

We must continue to support and reinforce mechanisms like the Haiti Interim Recovery Commission, created to help ensure that the reconstruction process remains transparent, accountable and conducive to long-term structural change. We must hold each other to account and follow through on our promises, while making it clear that we expect Haitian leaders to do the same.

This will not be easy and it will not be quick. However, we are doomed to repeat the same mistakes if we do not at long last address the question of governance in Haiti.

We were pleased to note that the United Nation's Special Representative to the Secretary General in Haiti, Mr. Edmond Mulet, shares this view and has urged the international community to make strengthening the rule of law a priority. This includes such measures as reforming the justice, police and prison systems, which must be undertaken in a simultaneous and dedicated manner.

As outlined in a recent UN report on Haiti, such fundamental reform requires an alignment of international partners with national players, in collaboration with the Government of Haiti. As suggested, a governance compact, or "pacte pour l'État de droits" would help guide the reform of key institutions and systems and re-engage the new Haitian authorities as well as the Haitian people.

Canada welcomes this suggestion and looks forward to contributing to such an important initiative, without which we are unlikely to see sustainable progress in Haiti.

As I mentioned earlier, given the challenges and opportunities before us, today's Conference could not be more opportune. This meeting, gathering the most eminent experts on Haiti will provide us with the opportunity to candidly discuss governance and its link not only to reconstruction, but to long-term prosperity and development in that country.

For it goes without saying that there can be no sustainable development, no significant economic growth and no real

improvement for the lives of Haitians unless they have a stable government and functioning, trustworthy institutions.

A government that puts the needs of its people first and settles political differences through democratic means is what is most needed in Haiti. The Haitian people, who have endured so much, deserve nothing less.

Of course, while there are many challenges requiring attention and sustained efforts, there have also been successes. Our collective response to the earthquake and the delivery of critical humanitarian aid in the emergency phase contributed to saving a great many lives. The provision of security through MINUSTAH helped ensure calm in a situation that could have turned to chaos.

Today's conference therefore also offers us the opportunity to discuss best practices and lessons learned regarding the humanitarian response to natural disasters, with a view to improving coordination under the leadership of the United Nations among governments and humanitarian partners such as UN agencies, the Red Cross and NGOs, as well as with local authorities. Discussions today will inform our future

actions in Haiti, and it is also my hope that, as a result of this conference, we will collectively be better prepared the next time a disaster strikes.