

Press release

Subject: Pan-African solidarity with Haiti

Date: 22nd January 2010

The earthquake that recently struck Haiti has caused unprecedented devastation and suffering to the country and its people. Wednesday's aftershock aggravated an already grave humanitarian crisis.

Across Africa, government, church, business and civil society leaders are mobilizing support for the people of Haiti. In South Africa, CIVICUS and its partners, African Monitor, Trust Africa, the Southern Africa Trust, Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) Southern Africa, the South African Red Cross Society; the National Welfare Forum; and Ivan May through 1485 Radio Today on 1484 AM in Jozi and through SADC (also DStv 169), the Synergos Institute, The NEPAD Business Foundation and the African Women's Foresight Network, have agreed to join what is known as the "Africa for Haiti Campaign" and to help in co-ordinating efforts.

The campaign has the support of Church, business and civil society leaders including Mrs Graça Machel, Archbishops Desmond Tutu, Njongonkulu Ndungane, Malusi Mpumlwana, Thabo Makgoba, and businessmen Trevor Ncube and Reuel Khoza.

The Nelson Mandela Foundation hosted a press conference at its offices in Houghton on 22 January where more details were provided about the "Africa for Haiti" Campaign.

The "Africa for Haiti" campaign will identify, in partnership with Haitian civil society organizations, initiatives in which it can assist. It also hopes to provide Africans from all walks of life an opportunity to demonstrate their collective solidarity and support for the people of Haiti thereby uniting Africans in compassion and giving.

Addressing the press conference Mrs Machel suggested that the "Africa for Haiti" campaign focuses its efforts on reconstruction in Haiti. The objective of this campaign is not to provide immediate relief but rather to contribute toward the medium to long-term reconstruction of communities in Haiti. As a result, it is estimated that fundraising for this campaign may continue for six months.

The campaign also aims to unite individuals, NGOs and corporates across Africa behind this cause by disseminating information and enlisting support from their extensive networks.

SUPPORTING STATEMENTS

Message of support from Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu:

“We were supported wonderfully by the International Community when we struggled against the vicious policy of apartheid. Today the people of Haiti, struck twice by the earthquake, are in a worse predicament than we were. As South Africans, we especially cannot but want to do our bit to alleviate the immense suffering of our sisters and brothers in Haiti. I welcome the initiative by Graça Machel and others. It deserves our wholehearted and very generous support.”

Statement from Archbishop Ndungane

Haiti’s worst earthquake that struck the Western Hemisphere’s poorest country on the 12th of January brought sadness and shock.

As the people of Africa, we identify with and feel for the people of Haiti, particularly because of our own experience of the devastation of poverty. We comprehend that this earthquake has exacerbated an already desperate situation.

When a brother or sister is in need, it is incumbent upon all of us to pool our resources to assist. The African Monitor family and I are solidly behind the ‘Africa for Haiti’ initiative, which seeks to assist the people of Haiti to recover from the destruction and devastation left by the earthquake.

As Africa, we have been recipients of help in our time of need and we appreciate how this can alleviate desperate situations.

Our continent can also make a big contribution towards restoring Haitian people through inner healing of hearts and memories for the traumatized people. This given that notwithstanding our own psychologically devastating past, we have picked up the pieces, healed and moved forward.

I therefore appeal to Africans from all walks of life to take this as a call to action and an opportunity to verify to ourselves how we are people with proven love, compassion and sensitivity, particularly in times of need.

With every good wish and blessing

Grace and Peace

Message from Archbishop Thabo Makgoba, Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town

I am glad to give my wholehearted support to this important initiative. Across the continent of Africa over the years, so many of us have been the recipients of all manner of aid and support through many differing circumstances of need. Now it is Africa's turn to stand in solidarity with the country and people of Haiti, and offer whatever assistance lies within our ability, in the aftermath of the devastating earthquakes. In South Africa earlier this week, Church leaders from across the Christian spectrum joined in calling for a generous response to this suffering which we can only begin to

(Thabo Makgoba continued)

imagine, and we welcomed the commitments that our own Government is making, alongside the growing help from individuals and organisations.

Yet we can and must do far, far, more. Now is the time for all Africans to join in helping these brothers and sisters of ours within the human family. We urge our political leaders not to be slow in joining the tide of compassion in response to this disaster. We too can show love and care, not only in words, but in providing financial and practical help, in sharing resources and expertise, especially in the challenging times of reconstruction that lie ahead. Therefore we look to the African Union Summit to express what it means truly to be 'Africans for Haiti'. One of the great riches of Africa is the spirit of ubuntu - the spirit that says 'a person is a person through other persons'. Now is the time to demonstrate our humanity through selfless generosity and tangible action. It is therefore my prayer that the Summit will have the courage and conviction to make specific and significant commitments, which are then swiftly and effectively implemented.

And in this way, may God in his mercy use us as a channel of blessing and love to those who stand in such great need at this time. Amen.

Africa for Haiti - Endorsement from the Most Revd Dr Thabo Makgoba, Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town

Message of support from Stanley Subramony, Nepad Business Foundation

“ It is time for Africa to play a meaningful role in assisting Haiti to rebuild its economic infrastructure. Support in industry, trade and agriculture will be central to the recovery and renewal of the Haitian nation. The tenacity and resourcefulness of the African people will be invaluable in creating a sustainable impact. This is indeed a difficult time for the people of Haiti but it is a time to face down adversity and proclaim that together with the rest of the world they will overcome these enormous challenges and rise to being a proud nation.”

• **The Members of the African Women’s Foresight Network are:**

- Bisi Adeleye Fayemi
- Bineta Diop
- Aleya Hammad
- Graça Machel
- Gertrude Mongella
- Gisele Yitamben
- Mamphela Ramphele

Mary Wandia

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