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REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON UNESCO'S POST-EARTHQUAKE RESPONSE IN HAITI

Summary of discussion and recommendations

UNESCO FORUM ON HAITI

Rebuilding the social, cultural and intellectual fabric of Haiti

24 March 2010

PRESENTATION

This document contains a summary of the debates conducted and recommendations made during the UNESCO Forum on Haiti of 24 March 2010 on "Rebuilding the social, cultural and intellectual fabric of Haiti".

REBUILDING THE SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL FABRIC OF HAITI

UNESCO Forum on Haiti of 24 March 2010 – UNESCO Headquarters, Paris

In the aftermath of the earthquake that devastated the Port-au-Prince region and other cities in Haiti, UNESCO immediately undertook to meet the needs of the Haitian people in its fields of competence. In order to integrate short-term and long-term needs more effectively, in particular in a developing country that was already in a difficult situation even before the earthquake, and to better coordinate its action with its United Nations and international community partners, UNESCO held a Forum on “Rebuilding the social, cultural and intellectual fabric of Haiti” on 24 March 2010 in Paris. In its role as a partner seeking to catalyze Haitian energies, UNESCO wished the meeting to be attended by decision-makers, intellectuals, artists and social scientists from the Haitian community at large, including representatives of the Haitian diaspora, and by international experts and friends of Haiti.

INAUGURATION

After declaring UNESCO as Haiti’s house for the day devoted to rebuilding the country’s social, cultural and intellectual fabric, Mrs Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, expressed her solidarity with the Haitian people. She reiterated her desire to work in the Organization’s fields of competence alongside the government and civil society to re-establish the country. The culture and identity of Haiti were the themes which must underpin all development strategies. In her opinion, no effort should be spared to bring culture into play in the major league. She committed to defending intellectual and cultural life as a requirement for the genuine and autonomous reconstruction of Haiti and she stated that the keynote of the day’s debates was the rebuilding of Haiti by and for the Haitian people.

The President of the General Conference, Mr **Davidson Hepburn**, expressed his support for Haiti as a representative of the Caribbean and Small Island Developing States. Underlining the resilience of the Haitian people, the importance of culture and intangible infrastructure and the challenges for successful international coordination, he stated that UNESCO’s role was to convince all stakeholders to assist Haiti in regaining its prosperity and dignity.

Ms **Eleonora Mitrofanova**, Chairperson of the Executive Board, congratulated the Director-General for UNESCO’s prompt response in aid of Haiti. Recalling that the management of post-disaster situations, rather than being limited to short-term projects, should constitute a long-term endeavour, she highlighted three elements required for success in this field: political will, financial resources and a qualified workforce. She then proposed a series of recommendations that could contribute in concrete terms to the rebuilding of Haiti: the elaboration of studies on seismic areas, the establishment of an international emergency fund for post-disaster operations and research on prevention; the preparation of specific teaching methods to raise the public’s awareness; the reconstruction of schools in such a way that they could serve as post-disaster emergency centres; and new methods for the protection of cultural property against earthquakes and post-disaster damage.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

The Minister for Culture and Communication of Haiti, **Marie-Laurence Jocelyn-Lassègue** began her presentation by stressing that the theme of the Forum responded directly to her government’s requirement to base the rebuilding of the country on Haitian identity and resilience in collaboration with all the international partners. She was gratified that culture was mentioned in the Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) which the Government of Haiti intended to present to the international community and she officially called for UNESCO’s support in favour of the recommendations contained in that document. Stating that Haiti lived on its tangible and intangible cultural resources, she appealed for recognition that the culture/development relationship must be based on two axes:

development of culture, culture through development. She emphasized the need to act in that direction along four main lines: institution building; economic development; identity, citizenship and social cohesion; and regional integration and international cooperation. The Minister concluded her presentation with an appeal to draft new cultural policies and to establish an observatory of Haitian culture.

Nobel Literature laureate, **Wole Soyinka**, began by noting that Haiti, a land of profound contradictions and the locus of the eternal struggle between slavery and freedom, symbolized at once the loftiest aspiration of the human spirit – freedom – and its opposite, the tyranny experienced on the political level as well as on the spiritual level through the misappropriation and distortion of voodoo. He evoked the lesson for humanity of the fate of a country whose origins were in Africa, and whose past emancipation struggles, living on intact in the world's memory, contrasted sharply with the lives of Haitians at present, characterized by needs of survival. Their burden henceforth being that of everyone, humanity owed a debt to Haiti which, over and above material assistance could only be settled, by means of support to recreate the society morally, socially and intellectually. A beacon of universal solidarity, Haiti would thus become an enduring affirmation of the human spirit and a vanguard of Africa transformed into a citadel of defiance and a vision of liberty. The fabric of Haiti could neither die nor stagnate.

Recalling that Haiti was one of the founding members of his organization, Mr **Clément Duhaime**, Administrator of the International Organization of the Francophonie (OIF) stated that the country's greatest wealth was its culture and identity, embodied in particular in bilingualism, Creole and French, which should be promoted as such. He also brought to mind that Haiti was behind the decision to make French one of the United Nation's working languages. He stressed the need to quickly build and rebuild university networks and cultural centres, in particular community centres. He appealed to UNESCO to work in collaboration with the OIF to prevent the imposition of a single and foreign way of thinking in Haiti in a context of crisis. In his opinion, Haiti faced two daunting challenges: firstly, the reconstruction of Haiti must entail rebuilding the social, cultural and intellectual fabric, which meant it must be done by Haitians themselves; secondly, reconstruction work must eventually give way to sustainable development. He emphasized the need to work both with Haitian actors in the field and with international organizations and development agencies.

"Haiti is not alone". These poignant words of United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon opened the presentation of Mrs **Sonia Sarmiento Gutierrez**, Ambassador of Colombia to UNESCO and Chairperson of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries (GRULAC) of UNESCO. She stated that the wave of solidarity expressed towards Haiti by Latin America and the Caribbean had not receded and that her region was ready to continue its efforts within the framework of international cooperation, in particular during the donors' meeting in New York on 31 March 2010. UNESCO had essential assets to ensure the transition from a humanitarian emergency to long-term development and goals. She also stressed the need to promote Haitian ideals by supporting young men and women. She voiced her conviction that, for Haiti, international support for spreading and preserving its identity and culture, its traditions and artistic and intellectual expressions would contribute to forging the path to its future. She reiterated the extent to which the region owed its freedom to Haiti and its history.

Expressing the need to ensure civil, political and social equality to the population, Ms **Marie Denise Jean**, Deputy Permanent Delegate of the Republic of Haiti to UNESCO, stated that, for Haitians, it would not be sufficient to simply rebuild, but rather to rebuild differently. For that great and glorious task, she called for the will, energy and capacities available in the country and its diaspora. In order for Haitians to learn to live together, what was needed was revolution in people's thinking, promoting the values of heritage, identity and cultural creativity of Haiti, the pearl of the Caribbean. Tomorrow's Haiti would only be sustainable if a number of challenges were met, in particular in the fields of culture, education and the environment, including the restoration of natural reserves. She considered that the holding of the Forum by UNESCO was a positive sign of the international community's will to contribute to the rebirth of a Haiti synonymous with a responsible, autonomous and democratic society.

A message by the French Minister for Culture and Communication, Mr **Frédéric Mitterrand**, was read out by Ms Catherine Colonna, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of France to UNESCO. Quoting the Haitian writer René Depestre, Mr Mitterrand said that “Culture will save Haiti”. He stated that culture was decisive in rebuilding Haiti, for which it was a cardinal value. Recalling the attachment of his country’s authorities and the artistic and intellectual community of France to Haiti, he mentioned several French initiatives aimed at rebuilding its social, cultural and intellectual fabric, focusing particularly on the media sector, the preservation of cultural heritage, libraries, which were to receive 30,000 books, and the future project for a digital library.

SESSION 1: AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE: MOBILIZING KNOWLEDGE AND SOCIAL SKILLS TO REVIVE HAITI

Participants in this session, pointing to the catastrophic state of Haiti prior to the earthquake, with all its failing in terms of fragile governance, a profit-based economy, a fragmented society and the shortcoming of its intellectuals and journalists, expressed their fear of a poorly thought-out reconstruction that would throw Haiti back into the straitjacket of its recent past which all agreed was a model to be avoided at all costs. The social, cultural and intellectual fabric of Haiti was already in tatters before the earthquake. Some even voiced doubt as to whether it was possible to truly rebuild the country at all, given the extent of the brain drain from Haiti and the fact that in some areas such as the media, often considered uncritical and lacking in objectivity and relevancy, the same bad habits were re-emerging. They also noted that the outcome of reconstruction efforts would be uncertain if Haitians and the international community reacted to the earthquake in the same way as they had to the 2008 cyclones.

Other participants acknowledged these difficulties but felt that with strong political will there were grounds for hope. A new paradigm was still possible if the international community respected the dignity of Haitians and refrained from equating assistance with charity, as was recommended by the *Groupe de Réflexion et d'Action pour une Haïti Nouvelle* (GRAHN). Approaches needed to be reviewed for two reasons. First, too large a proportion of international aid was still tied up and did not entirely promote development from within. Secondly, the potential of Haitians living abroad remained underexploited, considering that the remittances they sent back home accounted for more than triple the amount of international aid received. It was generally agreed that the Haitian diaspora needed to be mobilized and encouraged to shoulder their share of responsibility.

Civil society needed to be represented – in discussions with the international community, for example – and Haiti needed to become a responsible, independent and resilient nation. In a context of economic reform, that meant listening to those without a voice, reaching out to those left by the wayside, and giving their rightful place to grassroots actors and to local and endogenous knowledge that could be used in synergy with, and not in opposition to, westernized knowledge. The reality of rural Haiti – all too often neglected on the altar of an export-driven economy – must be recognized. Haiti needed to be allowed to come to terms with itself in a context of political decentralization. It was also recommended that often forgotten economic stakeholders such as households and local small- and medium-sized businesses – particularly in the farming sector – be granted credit on a massive scale; that structural adjustment programmes be renegotiated; that priority be given to communications and that workers’ rights be improved.

These goals could not be achieved without the efforts of artists, intellectuals and journalists. The Haitian government and international community therefore needed to work towards the training of artists and craftspeople and examine the issue of the status of the artist in the light of the definition established by UNESCO. It was essential to create facilities for the arts, including the performing arts, as these were sorely lacking. Concerning the media, a national review was needed of vocational and university-level training programmes, the status of journalists and media legislation – an admittedly long and arduous process. It would also be necessary to establish networks, including in particular independent public media and community media networks. In sum, Haiti could mobilize its artistic and intellectual creative strengths to become a showcase example of alternative development.

SESSION 2: A UNIQUE HISTORY CONTINUED: THE STRENGTH OF HAITI'S HERITAGE, IDENTITY AND CULTURAL CREATIVITY

Several speakers voiced a warning: the deep fear felt after the earthquake should not give free run to irrational reactions and inertia. The international community was asked to see Haitian voodoo not only as a religion but as a way of feeling and even the multifaceted form of the collective imagination. In the face of international kindness and support, resignation and victimization were to be avoided in order to regain self-respect. National-international paradigms should not erase national responsibilities. A shared sense of responsibility should be brought to the fore; the foundations of the Haitian State needed to be reconstructed. Central to the issue of reconstruction was the need to move away from humanitarianism and back to politics in a new approach to interaction with the international community. All speakers at the meeting stressed this need for a new approach, highlighting the fact that successive development policies had achieved little of note.

In this context, some speakers, pointing to the growing inequalities in all regions of the world, highlighted the global dimension of the forthcoming crisis and the need for new models towards which North and South must work together. Several speakers rejected outright any approach oriented towards rebuilding Haiti "from scratch" at the expense of its history. While Haitians needed to come to terms with themselves and with each other and, despite repeated trauma, do justice to their glorious past, a country like France needed to admit that, having left a part of itself in Haiti, it would also be able to find itself there again today, and recognize together, with the rest of the international community, that Haiti was not simply a recipient, but it had much to offer. Shaped by African, Caribbean and Western influences, Haiti had been and still was a wellspring of talent and through its resistance and resilience had provided a fine example of creativity, humanity and openness to the world.

Sustainable development would only be possible by drawing on the cultural resources and identity of the Haitian population. It could therefore be hoped that including culture in the post-disaster needs assessment (PDNA) signalled – in spite of the underrepresentation of civil society – the beginning of positive changes in the approach taken and the models used for development, which remained a major challenge for Haiti above and beyond the urgent need for reconstruction. Since Haiti's problems predate the earthquake, the country needed to address head on issues related to rapid demographic growth, uncontrolled urbanization and external military presence in the country. To face these challenges, strong action must be taken to give priority to higher education in order to produce local experts capable of connecting policy to social reality, along with intellectuals and journalists capable of mobilizing the public by giving them the keys not only to their history and their dignity but also to their future – the only way Haitians would eventually be able to control their own development. Looking at the challenges of development through a new prism, Haiti emerged as having substantial assets in the context of the increasingly accepted notion that cultural heritage and creativity are driving forces of development, and cultural diversity an essential vector of this.

SESSION 3: REBUILDING THE EDUCATION SYSTEM: A CRITICAL CONDITION FOR HAITIAN RENEWAL AND A SOURCE OF INTELLECTUAL VITALITY

The earthquake brought down an education system that was already deficient before 12 January 2010 and did not meet the ideals of free, universal education, even though these had long been enshrined in Haiti's successive constitutions. Because of this historical grounding, however, the education system could not be built up from scratch after the earthquake on a *tabula rasa* basis, since its foundations lay in the country's rich and diverse culture.

By killing thousands of teachers and destroying or damaging 80% of school infrastructure, thereby depriving nearly one and a half million pupils of education, the earthquake only exacerbated a series of chronic, structural problems, including the fact that 500,000 children had never attended school. All Haitian children must eventually have a school to go to. An important factor to be taken into consideration was the considerable influence of the private sector, which catered for more than

80% of pupils. It was necessary to review educational policies with a view to developing public-private partnerships and the non-profit private sector. Through these partnerships, for instance, the State would be placed in a strategic position in terms of policy and funding, enjoying the backing of the international community, with UNESCO and its International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) in a lead role, and the private sector as a service provider. It would otherwise be hardly conceivable to achieve the goals of free and universal education in a country in which 96% of the population lived on less than US \$2 a day.

The scattered rural population and long distances to school prevented the enrolment of many children, who were often condemned to domestic or manual work. The education system thus suffered many problems before the earthquake, compounded by persistent, traditional forms of discrimination, HIV/AIDS, accelerated demographic growth not offset by policies and infrastructure, and so forth. Teaching methods were outdated and inappropriate, teachers were left without quality pre-service and in-service training and there was no effective teacher recruitment or inspection system. Vocational and technical education was so ill-suited to market needs that a significant proportion of middle management positions were given to foreigners and too many economic stakeholders operated in the informal sector. The university system, its training provision and qualifications were no longer a reference. The international aid system was fragmented and its management by the Government piecemeal. A new dual pact should be established, based on both the Government's relationship with donors and its responsibility towards the Haitian people.

While it was necessary in practical terms to rebuild safer buildings meeting seismic standards, it was essential to establish an integrated education system in Haiti with publically measurable performance, which called for appropriate indicators and accountability and peer evaluation mechanisms. The support of the international community was crucial but would be effective and justified only if it was consistent with the priorities of the Haitian people and prevented their education system both from being placed under supervision and from paralysis as a result of inappropriate competition among international aid agencies. Speakers recalled that education also provided citizenship training based on shared values and teaching pupils to treasure their own identity and country – products of a unique historical, linguistic, cultural and natural heritage. As a social and societal project, the education system should be based on a specifically Haitian social and political pact involving civil society, political parties and intellectuals, together with the representatives of the Haitian Government.

Conclusions and recommendations

The form, content and general tone of this Forum's debates – in which emotions rode high – brought out, in an institution used to more formal exchanges, the violence inflicted by the earthquake on the Haitian people and the depth of the political and social wounds that had at times been reopened. Through the songs sung and poems recited, this day of discussions at UNESCO Headquarters on the reconstruction, refounding and development of a country devastated but still erect, brought to life a part of the intangible heritage of Haiti, a land whose oral culture is held so dear by a people for whom it represents perhaps the sole memory of its African ancestors deported as slaves to Saint-Domingue. The fact that the decision-makers, intellectuals, artists and experts from Haiti, the Haitian diaspora and friends of Haiti did not seek to gloss over divisions and tensions served as a reminder to UNESCO that its basic mission was to help new ideas and prospects to emerge and reverberate through dialogue, and that achieving a consensus began by recognizing the lack of agreement. It is on the basis of such debates, turbulent and impassioned though they may be, that Haitians will be able to give impetus to a new social contract between the people and the Government.

Systematizing the bottom-up approach for governance, reconstruction and institutions for and by Haitians

At the Forum, Haitians and their friends indicated generally that the reconstruction of Haiti, conducted in partnership with the international community, should be geared to and inspired by

Haitians. Rejecting the idea of development on a *tabula rasa* basis, they stressed the principle that Haiti should be reborn – in other words, developed primarily on the basis of Haitian resources, capacities and skills. Most statements also called for civil society to be promoted in all its diversity, including non-governmental organizations, political parties, intellectuals and public figures endowed with moral authority, as well as members of the diaspora, whose role in the country's development would be much greater than merely remitting funds.

- Any definition of a reconstruction programme and initiative should associate all of Haiti's forces in an inclusive approach comprising the Government, private sector, civil society, political parties, trade unions, the diaspora and so on;
- In a context of reform and institutional reinforcement, decentralization policies should be implemented taking into account municipal authorities, local communities and associations, as well as local and endogenous expertise;
- The national debate on the natural and social environment, should be continued, in order to identify a series of agreed solutions to challenges such as deforestation, soil erosion, biodiversity loss, demographic acceleration, sustainable development of the country, which includes fair access to sustainable infrastructures, and balanced town-country relationships, the corollary of controlled urbanization;
- With the aim of achieving social peace, reconstruction could afford an opportunity to set up a commission along the lines of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, thought out for and by the Haitians with a view, *inter alia*, to reducing the divisions and tensions revived by the earthquake, in particular between the elites and the protesting masses, the urban centres and the countryside, and Haitians in Haiti and the diaspora.

Culture, the leaven of social cohesion and the engine of development

The inclusion of culture among the themes of the Haitian Government's post-disaster needs assessment (PDNA) was recognized as a major advance for Haiti. Indeed, the Forum demonstrated that cultural heritage, creativity and intellectual life were matters of keen social and civic awareness in Haiti. Throughout the Forum, it was recognized that culture could and should act on the twin, complementary planes of social cohesion and economic development. In the wake of the many traumas of a tumultuous history and a series of natural disasters, the safeguarding and promotion of Haitian culture was an indispensable prerequisite for ensuring that Haitian society recovered its cohesion, coherence and resilience. Through cultural industries and cultural tourism, culture was also an engine for Haiti's autonomous development, for which assistance would be required for training in the various cultural trades in general and, more specifically, for cultural equipment and facilities.

- Support the creative sector by providing training in artistic trades and the performing arts, as well as setting up arts venues (cinemas, theatres);
- Establish a status for artists based on the definition given by UNESCO;
- Restore psycho-social ties and intra-community dialogue by mobilizing artists and Haitian intellectuals including the diaspora;
- Launch a policy of international cooperation for the reconstruction of the cultural heritage alongside Haitian professionals;
- Conserve and enhance the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of Haiti in a context of renewed, sustainable cultural tourism;

- Safeguard the cultural and artistic heritage against looting and the destruction of property benefiting private collectors;
- Formulate cultural policies relating to cultural and linguistic identity and to the enhancement of the cultural heritage and creative industries;
- Strengthen the link between culture and development with two thrusts: the development of culture, and culture by development.

Integrated education system: the post-earthquake reconstruction should afford an opportunity to start a “virtuous circle” for Haitian society and economy

In the field of education, the key message concerned the need for an integrated refounding of the education system, which should neglect none of its components, from early childhood education to higher education, and including vocational education. Noting that the education system had already been chronically in crisis before the earthquake, Haiti’s representatives urged that post-earthquake reconstruction should afford an opportunity to improve the system by working to achieve the objectives of free and universal education that have long been enshrined in Haiti’s successive Constitutions. They stressed, in particular, that schools rebuilt through public-private partnerships should not only enable previously enrolled pupils to return to school, but also permit enrolment of 500,000 hitherto unenrolled children. A number of challenges should be taken up in higher education, the cornerstone of Haitian reconstruction and development, regarding, in particular, training for the country’s key supervisory personnel, adaptation of currently available training courses to the employment market, and quality training for teachers and trainers.

- Build schools for the 1.5 million Haitian children currently without a school, comprising those whose schools were destroyed or damaged by the earthquake or those who were previously unenrolled in the school system;
- Assess the educational and scientific needs and resources of Haiti with a view to reforms targeting the planning and establishment of an integrated education system extending from school to university, from early childhood education to the training of researchers, teachers and trainers;
- Put in place quality education, in particular by revising school curricula to bring them into line with historic, economic, social and linguistic realities;
- Move towards providing free education up to a minimum age;
- Establish public-private partnerships to provide a quality public service comprising private services and public funding and steering, with emphasis on private, non-profit education;
- Rebuild schools which comply with seismic standards, intended for use as emergency post-disaster centres;
- Set up centres for training in seismic methods and natural disasters intended for building professionals, engineers, architects and urban planners;
- Establish centres for fast-track training in the areas of construction and agriculture along the lines of the model that was used in Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War.

Media empowerment to disseminate objective and quality information to Haitians

One of the strong conclusions drawn at the Forum concerned the correlation between the dearth of quality information provided and the shortcomings noted by many Haitian experts in such areas as

transparency of State action, corruption, climate change, deforestation and information on natural disasters. Acknowledging the inalienability of freedom of the press, in particular in order to ensure that the media are independent of political authorities and moneyed interests, the panellists agreed on a number of points relating, in particular, to training in the journalism professions, the status of journalists and the need for the most objective and reliable information to be disseminated.

- Develop a sector of objective and pluralist media by offering a variety of training programmes for journalists;
- Set up a journalist status, and in the long-term, draft a press Act;
- Strengthen community media and radios;
- Establish an independent public information network.