



Press Release

*News from*  
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**REP. ENGEL CHAIRS HEARING ON HAITI;  
ASKS, "ARE WE MOVING FAST ENOUGH" ON RELIEF AND  
RECONSTRUCTION IN HAITI**

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Eliot Engel, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, is holding a hearing today entitled, "The Crisis in Haiti: Are We Moving Fast Enough?"

At today's hearing, Rep. Engel asks if the United States and the international community are moving fast enough in helping Haiti recover from the devastating earthquake of January 12, 2010.

Witnesses at today's hearing include: Dr. Rajiv Shah (Administrator of the US Agency for International Development), Jimmy Jean-Louis (Haitian-American Actor and Goodwill Ambassador for the Pan American Development Foundation), Samuel Worthington (President and Chief Executive Officer of InterAction), Jonathan Reckford (Chief Executive Officer for Habitat for Humanity International), Dr. Barth Green (the President and Co-Founder of Project Medishare), Joia Jefferson Nuri (Chief of Staff of TransAfrica), Michael Fairbanks (author, and Founder and Director of the SEVEN Fund), and Nicole Balliette (Deputy Director for Haiti Emergency Earthquake Response for Catholic Relief Services).

Following the session, testimony can be read and the proceedings can be viewed at <http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/subcommittees.asp?committee=8&sec=hearings>

The following is Chairman Engel's opening statement at today's hearing:

In March of this year, I visited Haiti to bear witness to the horrific loss of life and devastation which befell the country on January 12. I surveyed the damage done to the land and physical structures of Haiti. It was my intention then and remains my profound wish that the people of Haiti know that the United States is committed to help them rebuild their nation.

As Chairman, I went to determine what more America can provide to help Haitians recover from this tragedy and emerge as a stronger nation. As the representative from the 17th District, which

has a large community of Haitian-Americans, I went to experience first-hand what happened to their homeland, and to help bring back answers to my constituents. As a human being, I went to see the faces of the victims of this earthquake, and to offer whatever assistance I can provide them.

Haiti will recover, and America will be standing side-by-side with our neighbor. For now, we are doing everything in our power to accelerate that recovery. Haitian-American communities in New York, especially in my district in Spring Valley and Nyack, and in other states have welcomed victims with open arms. Our schools, such as the East Ramapo School District, have taken in children displaced by this natural disaster and are educating them. Likewise, Americans from all across the country have shown their sympathy for the people of Haiti in the generosity of the approximately \$1 billion given to Haitian relief.

The devastation in Haiti was so all-encompassing and the destruction was so complete, it is hard to know where to start. Should the international community focus first on shelter, health care, education, agriculture, or economic development or must we address all at once? And, regardless of how we prioritize our response in Haiti, one question keeps coming to mind as I think about the crisis in Haiti -- and you will see this in the title of today's hearing -- "**Are We Moving Fast Enough?**" More than six months have now passed since the earthquake and so much is yet to be done. We simply must carry out the relief and reconstruction program as fast as it can be accomplished. At this point, **I'm not sure if we are moving fast enough.**

Of the 2 million people who have been displaced in Haiti, approximately 1.5 million are still in camps. As of earlier this month, only 5,000 transitional shelters had been built in Haiti. USAID's Haiti Task Team Coordinator Paul Weisenfeld said on the six month anniversary of the earthquake that the international community has promised to build 125,000 shelters for about 600,000 people by July 2011. But, that will leave up to one million people without homes. And, there are concerns that the Haitian government has not resolved land titling issues so there aren't yet enough locations to resettle the large numbers of displaced people. Given this, **are we moving fast enough** in providing shelter to displaced people in Haiti and is the Haitian government moving fast enough to work out land title issues so that land can be set aside for additional shelter?

I have often heard that one of the greatest obstacles to rebuilding Haiti is that there is so much rubble from the earthquake which needs to be removed it is hard to get new construction going. I saw this with my own eyes when I visited in March. In fact, there is an estimated 25 million cubic meters of rubble to remove, but almost no place to put it but into the sea. As a point of comparison, the tragic destruction of the World Trade Center on 9/11 created 560,000 cubic meters of rubble. Some have said it will take two years to remove the rubble and estimates range up to ten years. Once again, **are we moving fast enough** to deal with the rubble removal problem?

Since the earthquake, various multilateral institutions, 48 countries, and a coalition of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) pledged approximately \$10 billion toward the long-term reconstruction efforts in Haiti. However, according to a recent article in The New York Times by former President Bill Clinton and Haitian Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive, Co-Chairs of the Interim Haiti Reconstruction Commission (IHRC), "only 10 percent of the \$5.3 billion pledged by governments at a United Nations conference in March has been disbursed to the Haitian government. Without reliable schedules for disbursement," Clinton and Bellerive say "the commission is unable to plan, finance projects or respond quickly to immediate needs." It is hard to understand with a crisis as large as that faced in Haiti that the money is not flowing faster. I ask again, **are we moving fast enough** in collecting and disbursing the pledged money for Haitian relief?

With respect to the IHRC, this critical body is only supposed to exist for 18 months to support the Haitian ministries and provide grants for rebuilding projects. But, now, more than six months after the earthquake, it is not yet fully staffed. Indeed, it is possible that the IHRC still requires another month or two to get its act in gear. With the enormity of the task ahead and the key commission not fully up and running, **are we moving fast enough** in Haiti?

Finally, we must not think that because the problem to be fixed is in Haiti the answers are all to be found there. Here in Congress, we faced long delays on passage of the Supplemental Appropriations bill which contains \$2.9 billion to support relief efforts in Haiti. We should have moved faster, but I am glad that we have finally sent the bill to the President for his signature.

Regardless, I think I have conveyed my concern and am looking forward to this panel and today's witnesses so we can address the question, "**Are we moving fast enough**" in Haiti. With that, I would like to ask my friend, the Ranking Member, if he would like to offer an opening statement.

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