

Mobilizing the Caribbean Diaspora to Assist in Haiti's Reconstruction and Development*

Background

It is widely recognized that Diasporas can make, and have made, significant contributions to their countries and regions of origin. The Caribbean Diaspora's significant contributions in the form of remittances are frequently underscored. These remittances constitute a significant portion of the GDP of many Caribbean countries. However, while it has been recognized that the Caribbean Diaspora community is endowed with a significant abundance of knowledge, expertise, skills and business resources that are required for advancing all areas of Caribbean development no efficient mechanism exists to fully mobilize this beneficial relationship with the Caribbean. Thus the potential advantage that would accrue by engaging fully the Caribbean Diaspora has remained illusive and the Caribbean Diaspora's expertise and businesses remain underutilized assets in the pursuit of Caribbean development.

Serious efforts to mobilize the Caribbean Diaspora to engage effectively on Caribbean development began in 2004 with the convening of a Jamaican Diaspora conference in Jamaica by then-Jamaican Prime Minister Percival James Patterson. While other CARICOM states have begun their own efforts to engage with their Diaspora communities, the Jamaican model was perceived as a potential example for other CARICOM states that would lead ultimately to bringing the entire Caribbean Diaspora together for the benefit of the region. The process has moved slowly forward, hence all appropriate mechanisms are yet to be established in order to realize the full potential of the Diaspora community. The consequence has been a less than coherent and unified Caribbean Diaspora community often lacking in organizational cohesiveness and synergy.

Caribbean leaders convened in Washington in June 2007 for the Washington Conference on the Caribbean and in that forum endorsed a number of proposals for engaging fully the benefits to flow from organized and institutionalized Caribbean Diaspora mechanisms. These included the establishment of a Caribbean think-tank

* This paper was prepared by the Caribbean Research & Policy Center, Inc. (CRPC) to inform Conference participants. It does not represent the views or positions of the members of the Caucus of CARICOM Ambassadors, individually or collectively, the Haitian Diaspora Federation, the Organization of American States, the Inter-American Development Bank, or any of the Conference presenters or participants who collaborated with the CRPC in staging this Conference. Special thanks to Ambassador Curtis Ward and E. Leopold Edwards for their inputs in the preparation of this paper.

in Washington DC, a Caribbean science and technology institute, and a national political action committee. The recently established Caribbean Research & Policy Center (CRPC) is a product of the 2007 Conference and long-held objective of members of the Diaspora community.

It is in the context of an organized and enabled Caribbean Diaspora that former prime minister Patterson, on the occasion of the 4th Annual CIN Caribbean Lecture at the Schomburg Center for Black Culture in New York, in November 2007, while addressing the role of the Caribbean Diaspora in the region's development, implored its members *"to embrace Haitians as their kith and kin."*

The Way Forward

In the immediate aftermath of the tragic earthquake of 12 January 2010 in Haiti, the Caribbean Diaspora community worldwide (including in the Caribbean) and the CARICOM family, of which Haiti is a part, responded to the plight of their brothers and sisters in Haiti with the same level of commitment and passion as if each was responding to natural disasters in their respective homelands. While the Haitian nationals in the Diaspora are expected to lead the response to Haiti's tragedy, and has led in this effort, the entire Caribbean Diaspora community has an important, equal and complementary role in Haiti's reconstruction and development efforts. Every effort must be made, therefore, to ensure that Caribbean Diaspora expertise as a whole is employed in Haiti's reconstruction and development, as well as in strengthening CARICOM's role in this effort. The Diaspora's role should not be reactive purely to Haiti's humanitarian and reconstruction needs in the short- to medium-term, but must be employed on a continuing basis over the long-term.

The Caribbean Diaspora Conference on Haiti's Reconstruction and Development aims to take the Diaspora community's engagement to a practical and programmatic level. It envisions a level of engagement which is not a one-off or short-term response to a natural disaster, but rather a long-term engagement in Haiti's reconstruction and future development. It envisions the establishment of a permanent mechanism for identifying, classifying, and making available a database of Caribbean Diaspora expertise (individuals and businesses), skills and resources that can be sourced and utilized by the international donor and development community, the Haitian and other Caribbean governments in Haiti's reconstruction and development, and in the development of the Caribbean region as a whole. As envisioned, such a mechanism should have the capacity to facilitate all major players in actively engaging with the Caribbean Diaspora community and integrating its expertise in their programs and projects, thus removing an often expressly identified impediment to such engagement.

Immediately following the fatally disastrous earthquake in Haiti, the idea for a Caribbean Diaspora Conference to assist in Haiti's reconstruction was mooted on the Caribbean Diaspora Connect blog (www.caribbeandiasporaconnect.com), on 13 January 2010. Specifically, in a statement entitled—***"Haiti's Tragedy - What We Do Next"***—it was proposed *"that a Caribbean Diaspora Conference on Haiti be convened in Washington, DC to bring synergy to the organizations, groups and individuals who wish to contribute to Haiti's rebuilding."* It further suggested that the Caucus of CARICOM Ambassadors was the appropriate organ to convene such a conference. In response, this Conference—*Mobilizing the Caribbean Diaspora to Assist in Haiti's Reconstruction and Development*—is convened in collaboration with the Caribbean Research & Policy Center (CRPC) with the support of the Haitian Diaspora Federation (HDF), and the support of the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

It should be noted that prior to the recent disastrous earthquake, the Haitian government through its Ministry of Planning had made a good-faith effort to develop a Strategic National Plan for Sustainable Development. Available data indicate that Haiti, notwithstanding limited resources (financial and expertise), had begun to make perceptible progress. The reversal and devastation caused by the earthquake underscored Haiti's need for the sincere and committed support of all governments, institutions, organizations, and individuals of good will who are prepared to contribute to Haiti's reconstruction and long-term development. In this regard, Haiti especially needs the full and committed support of:

- international organizations, institutions and specialized agencies and programs;
- regional and sub-regional institutions and organizations, in particular the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Organization of American States (OAS), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB);
- bilateral partners, in particular the United States, Canada, fellow CARICOM Members, and other states; and
- the Caribbean Diaspora and international non-governmental organizations.

Each of the foregoing categories of participants, based on their competences and resources, has a special role in response to Haiti's humanitarian needs, reconstruction and long-term sustainable development. Many of these roles are cross-cutting and complementary with each possessing different human and financial capacities to contribute to the overall effort to assist Haiti. It is imperative,

therefore, that a major effort is made to bring all players together to work in harmony, so as to avoid duplication and waste of resources, and to maximize available expertise. The Interim Commission for the Reconstruction of Haiti (ICRH-HIRC) is an important vehicle in this effort. Facilitating the work of the participants by integrating available Caribbean Diaspora expertise in their programs and projects is a primary goal of this Conference.

The Haitian Diaspora in cooperation with the OAS and with the support of the Governments of the United States of America and Canada, and the UK Kellogg Foundation organized a very successful Forum aimed at mobilizing and organizing the Haitian Diaspora (held 21-23 March 2010, OAS Headquarters, Washington DC). The Caribbean Diaspora Conference aims to build on this initial effort, to unify, and broaden the participation of, the entire Caribbean Diaspora in Haiti's reconstruction and development.

This Conference will take note that the Government of Haiti, with the support of the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) and the international community, prepared and presented to the Donors Meeting (31 March 2010, United Nations Headquarters, New York) a highly competent and comprehensive document entitled "*Action Plan for National Recovery and Development of Haiti. (Action Plan)*"

The approved Action Plan outlines clearly the sectoral activities and initiatives, which are needed, as follows:

- *Territorial Rebuilding:* Reconstruction of the devastated zones and urban renovation, the road network, regional development hubs and urban renovations, preparation for the hurricane season, and regional planning and local development
- *Economic Rebuilding:* Re-launch of national production, restoration of economic and financial circuits, and access to electricity.
- *Social Rebuilding:* Health, food safety, nutrition, water, sanitation, high labor-intensive activities.
- *Institutional Rebuilding:* Democratic institutions, restart of public administration, justice and security.

The Plan further specifies the need for "Reconstruction of a Critical Mass of Qualified Human Resources", which includes: "Drawing up and implementation of a program of involvement of executives and technicians from the Diaspora in the process of construction/reconstruction of the country."

All of these needs are to be met within the following time-frames:

- Short-term: 2010 – 2012
- Medium-term: 2010 - 2015
- Long-term: 2010 – 2030.

Framework for Caribbean Diaspora Participation

The members of the Caribbean Diaspora possess a wide array of expertise and necessary skills and are capable of making significant contributions to the rebuilding and long-term development of Haiti. There are numerous Caribbean individuals, in particular of Haitian origin (professionals and businesspersons), civic organizations, and other NGOs that have been making significant contributions to Haiti, each doing their part often with limited resources. Their continued and expanded participation in this grand scheme is of the utmost importance. It is important, therefore, that the major players identified above provide support to the Diaspora to establish mechanisms and procedures for engaging with them in order to enhance the use of Diaspora expertise in their Haiti programs.

CARICOM's commitment to Haiti

Consequent upon the fatally disastrous catastrophe of January 12, 2010, CARICOM gave to Haiti, a member state of CARICOM, its commitment to support fully and provide all feasible assistance in promoting and implementing the Strategic National Plan for the short, medium and long-term sustainable development of Haiti. In that regard, CARICOM Heads of Government appointed a Special Representative for Haiti to help lead the process of Haiti's reconstruction and to provide support to Haiti's efforts in garnering international support.

Recognizing the importance of mobilizing, organizing, and enabling the Caribbean Diaspora, this one-day *"Caribbean Diaspora Conference on Haiti's Reconstruction and Development"* is convened.

Among the primary objectives of the Conference are:

- To promote and consolidate understanding and agreement among the critical actors concerning the "principles" and "understandings" which have been accepted thus far;
- To support and promote the coordination process which is vital to the successful implementation of the "Haitian Plan of Action";
- To solicit and gain tangible support from the critical actors for mechanisms to mobilize, organize, and utilize the potential of the Caribbean Diaspora.

Workshops

In order to enhance the Diaspora's capacity to engage meaningfully in this process, and to prepare for participation in the solutions to Haiti's needs, participants at the Caribbean Diaspora Conference will be given the opportunity to attend one of four simultaneous workshops, in accordance with their particular interests and competencies. Therein they will be free to discuss and offer recommendations for appropriate problem-solving activities.

Workshop #1:

To develop guidelines for establishing the mechanism and database of Caribbean Diaspora expertise and business capabilities:

- (i) Funding
- (ii) Data gathering and research
- (iii) Management and maintenance of mechanism and database.

Workshop #2:

To identify areas where the Diaspora can contribute and make an immediate impact in the short-term reconstruction efforts in Haiti and the way forward;

Workshop #3:

To identify areas for Diaspora engagement over the medium- and long-term in Haiti's development and the requirements for effective engagement;

Workshop #4:

To identify ways to aid in strengthening CARICOM's participation in Haiti's reconstruction and development

In going forward there are sector specific expertise and skills sets which are required for the reconstruction, rebuilding and long-term development of Haiti. Addendum I— ***Concepts for reconstruction and development***, and Addendum II— ***Expertise categories***, while not exhaustive, provide some guidance to areas in which Caribbean Diaspora expertise and business competencies may be utilized.

ADDENDUM I

Concepts for Rebuilding

In the rebuilding of any country devastated by war or natural disaster there are certain fundamental areas that must be addressed in that country's reconstruction and development efforts. In that regard, success can be assured when rebuilding is undertaken in the context of:

- top priority reconstruction alongside long-term sustainable development;
- a whole-of-government strategy/approach;
- building the capacity of government institutions to deliver high-impact economic assistance—especially in the service and agricultural sectors—to create jobs;
- the government taking strong actions to combat corruption, improve governance, rule of law, and transparency in order to provide better services to the populace.

The following summarizes areas that ought to be given the full attention of the assistance and development community and represents areas in which Caribbean Diaspora expertise can make significant contributions:

1. *Reconstruction and Development*

- Projects which involve training and job creation—critical capacity-building for sustainable economic growth in the long-term;
- Creating links to cross-border trade—increasing capacity to secure borders and increase customs revenue will support sustainable long-term economic growth and job creation, such as in the agricultural—an agricultural-led redevelopment strategy—and other export-growth sectors;
- Increase government's capacity to provide improved health and education services;
- Increase government's capacity to provide housing solutions;
- Rural development – providing education, health, and housing services in rural areas;
- Enhance capacity of Haitian institutions to bolster economic reform;
- Enhance government's capacity to rehabilitate and protect the environment.

2. *Improving Governance*

- Build institutional capacity of the Haitian government to be responsive, transparent and accountable, and encourage and support government's plans to fight corruption;

- Enhance capacity of Haitian institutions to carry out political reform—in particular electoral reform to ensure a free and fair electoral process;
- Promote transparency and accountability in government.

3. *Rule of Law*

- Assist the Haitian government to create and improve on predictable, fair and accessible dispute resolution mechanisms;
- Modernizing Haiti’s Criminal and Civil Codes;
- Modernizing, training, and enabling civilian police and other civilian security forces;
- Modernizing the criminal justice system, including the juvenile justice, correctional and rehabilitative systems, and the training and enabling of prosecutors, judges and magistrates, and correctional personnel;
- Establishing a legal and operational framework for the protection and enforcement of human rights, civil and political rights, and ensuring there is no impunity for wrongdoers;
- Enabling the legislature to adopt new laws, as required to establish a modern legislative framework, through the training of legal drafters and legislators.

4. *Advancing the Participation of Haitian Women*

- Empowering Haitian women—critical to unleashing the full economic potential of the Haitian people;
- Providing initiatives focused on: women’s security, women’s leadership in the public and private sector, women’s access to judicial institutions, education, and health services, women’s ability to take advantage of economic opportunities (including access to micro-finance), and entrepreneurial training;
- Increasing women’s participation in the political process.

5. *Civilian and Private Sector Participation*

- Decrease reliance on large contractors—developing a cadre of competent small and medium enterprises, and encouraging entrepreneurship;
- Increase assistance directly to Haitian government ministries whose capacities have been enhanced and have been certified for transparency and accountability (an anti-corruption requirement);
- Enhance civilian partnership with the Haitian government to enhance the capacity of government institutions and provide technical expertise to help rehabilitate Haiti’s key economic sectors.

6. *Targeting Assistance Programs*

- The donor community should ensure a reliably consistent flow of sizable, long-term commitment of economic assistance;

- Assist the Haitian government to address immediate energy, water, housing, and related economic crises;
- Support broader economic and democratic reforms that are necessary to put Haiti on a path towards sustainable job creation and economic growth—necessary for long-term stability and progress—and assistance to build a foundation for long-term development, including by enhancing ministerial capacities;
- Dealing with crime and violence
 - Transnational crimes, such as small arms proliferation and drug trafficking;
 - Reducing the drug trade and arms trade through increased interdiction of drug traffickers and arms traffickers by disrupting their networks;
 - Gang violence and environmental and social conditions conducive to criminal conduct;
 - Ensuring the security of the Haitian people—addressing all areas of human security—to allow the country to become more stable and prosperous;
- Providing security in airports and sea ports to support international trade—essential for developing and building a culture of legitimate trade and economic activity—and curbing illicit financial flows.

7. CARICOM and Associated States (including the Dominican Republic)

- Recognizing the legitimate and important role of Haiti’s regional neighbours in the reconstruction and long-term sustainable development of Haiti;
- Recognizing the role of Caribbean institutions—particularly education and health institutions—in Haiti’s long-term economic growth and stability;
- Recognizing Haiti’s security imperatives as the region’s security imperatives which, if unaddressed, have the potential to significantly affect the entire region’s stability, economic growth and development.

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ADDENDUM II

Expertise Categories

1. Application of Science and technology to critical sectors:

- (i) Agriculture and Agro-Industry
- (ii) Health and Nutrition
- (iii) Housing
- (iv) Mining
- (v) Transportation
- (vi) Energy Systems
- (vii) Environmental Protection
- (viii) Information and Communication.

2. International security, transnational crimes and security personnel capacity building:

- (i) Training and capacity building to provide security at borders, airports and seaports;
- (ii) Training and capacity building to enhance customs and immigration control and port security—International Ship and Port Facilities Security (ISPS) Code compliance—to secure the homeland and support international trade;
- (iii) Training and capacity building to combat transnational crimes—particularly small arms proliferation, drug trafficking enterprises, money laundering, human trafficking and migrant smuggling;
- (iv) Developing modalities for curbing gang violence and treating social conditions conducive to recruitment to violence;
- (v) Capacity-building to patrol territorial waters to interdict drug trafficking and secure territorial seas and maritime borders;
- (vi) Drafting and adopting implementing legislation for enforcement of international security instruments, including maritime and aviation security, counter-terrorism, and transnational crime conventions.

3. Economic development, trade, fiscal and financial expertise

- (i) Macro-economic policy development
- (ii) Fiscal management
- (iii) Land use policy development
- (iv) Agriculture and Agro-industry
- (v) Mining and minerals technology

- (vi) Small and medium size business development, with special emphasis on micro-finance and capacitating women.

4. Human development

- (i) Education and recreation
- (ii) Cultural development
- (iii) Community development
- (iv) Human rights training
- (v) Workers rights
- (vi) Training and organizational development of civil society

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