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Joint Statement by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton and Commissioners Kristalina Georgieva and Andris Piebalgs on the third anniversary of Haiti earthquake

Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Commissioners Kristalina Georgieva and Andris Piebalgs made today the following statement:

“This week marks the third anniversary of the earthquake that hit Haiti on the 12 January 2010, the devastating consequences of which have made it one of the worst natural disasters in recent history.

Today, as we take stock of our actions since the disaster, we are also reaffirming our long-term commitment to the Haitian people, whose recovery and sustainable development remain our priority.

Immediately after the earthquake, the European Union responded to the massive needs swiftly and decisively, saving lives and providing shelter to part of the 1.5 million Haitians left homeless. Although 350,000 people still live in temporary shelters, we have provided more than 500,000 people with housing. EU humanitarian aid has also supported the treatment of cholera and prevention of spread of epidemics. Equally importantly, we have focused on disaster risk reduction and measures to help Haitians become more resilient to future disasters. Altogether, EU humanitarian aid has benefited 5 million people, meaning every second Haitian.
In line with the government's priorities, the EU also supports governance, infrastructure (road construction, building schools...), economic activities and the state budget, enabling the administration to provide health, education and justice to the people. For example, around 7,000 teachers received training across the country and at least 120,000 children benefitted from the EU assistance on education over the last five years. Encouragingly, the Haitian economy is recovering at a rate of about 6-7% in 2012.

85% of the €522 million funds promised by the European Commission in 2010 have been committed and additional funding has been made available to address the needs of the population.

Of course, there is still a long way to go. Recent events like tropical storm Isaac and Hurricane Sandy make the recovery of Haiti even more difficult and highlight yet again the need to increase Haitians’ resilience to natural disasters.

Despite the progress made, implementation of EU development assistance to Haiti over the last three years has been particularly challenging as political instability has hampered coordination efforts and implementation of development programmes. In that regard, we commend the government's recent decision to accelerate the reforms aimed at improving the planning and coordination of aid, as their full ownership of the development process is a key condition to success in Haiti.

Three years on from the dreadful tragedy that struck in 2010, we are more determined than ever to demonstrate our commitment to Haiti. Helping it recover and build itself back better is the best way to show solidarity with the long-suffering people of this country and to honour the victims of the disaster.”

For more information
Factsheet "Third year commemoration of the Haiti earthquake"
http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/acp/country-cooperation/haiti/haiti_en.htm