

EXPRESSING CONDOLENCES TO HAITI

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(House of Representatives -
January 20, 2010)

Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Res. 1021, expressing condolences to and solidarity with the people of Haiti in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake of January 12, 2010

Madam Speaker, Americans are deeply saddened by the tremendous damage and loss of life caused by the earthquake that struck Haiti on January 12th.

The earthquake was truly a devastating natural disaster. There are enormous needs in Haiti. Authorities say that the earthquake may have killed 200,000 people. Three million people in Haiti need food, water, shelter, and medical assistance, according to an estimate given by the United Nations.

Tens of thousands of people sleep in the streets or under plastic sheets in makeshift camps. The spread of disease has become a major concern in Haiti. Tens of thousands of children have been orphaned by the earthquake.

I join with my colleagues in expressing the sympathies of the Congress, recognizing the long-term need for American assistance, and urging the President to adopt multiple approaches to assisting those affected by this tragedy now and in the future.

It is important to have the federal government participate in the broad, international relief effort. Action by the federal government demonstrates leadership from the highest level of government in helping meet the deep need for humanitarian aid.

Booker T. Washington captured well the importance of assisting people in need when he said, ``The highest test of the civilization of any race is in its willingness to extend a helping hand to the less fortunate."''

I am very proud that the American response to the Haitian tragedy is not limited to our government. Individuals, businesses, and philanthropic organizations have joined with our global colleague to respond to this tragedy.

During this time of extreme difficulty in Haiti, charities have raised more than \$210 million in donations for Haiti earthquake relief. A campaign using text messages brought in over \$21 million for the Red Cross for relief efforts.

In Chicago, I know that many churches, especially the Church of God in Christ, are rising to meet the tremendous needs of the people affected by the Haitian tragedy. The international community has come together to assist Haiti by sending emergency funds, search and rescue teams, food and water, and medical teams.

I want to emphasize that this resolution recognizes that Haiti's needs will be great, both in the short-term and the long-term. I believe that Americans and our government will rise to help meet these immediate and future challenges.

The people of Haiti and the United States have a long and complex relationship dating back to pre-slavery days. Our cultures, and our respective economic histories and destinies, are deeply intertwined. It is natural and just for our nation to take the lead in extending a hand of immediate relief to the people of Haiti in the aftermath of this horrific disaster and ultimately a hand in rebuilding their shattered nation so that the Haitian people can join with the developed nations of the world in a 21st century standard of living and security.