

April 4, 2010

LETTERS

Rebuilding Haiti: Getting It Right This Time

To the Editor:

Your March 28 editorial [“Making Haiti Whole”](#) is right on target about the challenges. Unfortunately, it inevitably raises a sense that we have seen this all before, reminding us of the expensive efforts at bringing former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide back to power in 1994 to embark on a process of democratization and economic reconstruction. At the time, a multiagency needs assessment mission took place, and donors contributed generously. This raised high expectations. Nevertheless, reconstruction failed, lack of productive alternatives made corruption and illegal activities thrive, and the well-being of the population did not improve.

To succeed this time, things need to be fundamentally different. The new strategy for reconstruction of Haiti should aim at nothing less than changing the political economy of the country. Employment creation will require basic infrastructure and the reactivation of investment, production and exports. This will happen only if Haiti establishes an adequate policy and institutional framework, and if donors create a more effective and accountable aid system and open up their markets to Haitian exports.

Graciana del Castillo
New York, March 29, 2010

The writer, a senior research scholar at Columbia University, was senior economist in the office of the United Nations secretary general in the 1990s.

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To the Editor:

While agreeing with the themes of your editorial, I believe that you have underestimated both the contributions that faith-based and other humanitarian organizations will make in the Haitian recovery as well as the short-term challenges facing the government and international donors. For example, Catholic Relief Services has been supporting effective Haitian self-help efforts, strengthening Haitian civil society and coordinating with institutions of the Haitian government for more than 50 years. Our efforts are anything but small-bore. In fact, we expect to invest up to

\$200 million in the Haitian recovery effort.

We are, however, extremely concerned about the short term — especially the need for the government of Haiti, the United Nations and the United States to move the thousands of displaced Haitians in vulnerable temporary camps to locations more protected from the imminent rains. It would be a terrible shame if the hopes we all share for helping Haiti overcome “its tragic history” were washed away in a second disaster.

Ken Hackett

President, Catholic Relief Services

Baltimore, March 30, 2010

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