



PRESS RELEASE

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Congresswoman Waters Calls for Free and Fair Elections in Haiti Following the Third Anniversary of the Haiti Earthquake

Washington – *Today, Congresswoman Maxine Waters (D-CA), a long-time advocate for development assistance and democracy for Haiti, called for free, fair, and inclusive elections in Haiti and urged support for the development of effective political institutions and stable, just and democratic governance. She made her remarks at a briefing on post-earthquake reconstruction in Haiti entitled, "Building back better needs open doors: Accountability is essential for a just reconstruction." The briefing was organized by the Haiti Advocacy Working Group (HAWG) as part of a series called "Remembering the Haitian Earthquake of 2010: Accountability for Haiti." Below are her remarks as prepared for delivery:*

The theme for this panel says it all! "Building back better needs open doors: Accountability is essential for a just reconstruction." Three years after the earthquake, more than 350,000 Haitians still live in tent camps. Money can be pledged, and promises can be made. But without accountability, there will be no progress.

According to a recent analysis by the *New York Times*, the United States has more than \$1 billion allocated for Haiti sitting in the Treasury, and the global Red Cross has an additional \$500 million for Haiti sitting in its accounts. Meanwhile, at least \$7.5 billion in official aid and private contributions has been disbursed. But much of the money that was disbursed was never actually spent. It was simply shifted from one bank account to another. For example, the United States long ago disbursed \$65 million to the Haiti Reconstruction Fund for a large housing project in Port-au-Prince. The fund issued a news release in January of 2011 promising houses for 50,000 people and then transferred the money to the World Bank, which is executing the project. The money is still there, and the contracts have just been signed.

Accountability requires oversight in Congress and in the donor community. It also requires effective political institutions and stable, just and democratic governance in Haiti. Reconstruction and development require organization, planning, and oversight. These are functions that are properly carried out by a government. It takes a government to make certain that houses are built near jobs and infrastructure; that children have schools in their neighborhoods; that farmers have roads to take their goods to market. Everything involved in development – from holding aid agencies accountable to urban planning to clean water – requires good, effective governance.

I have been concerned about the need for good governance in Haiti for many years. Haiti has a long, tragic history of dictatorship under the regimes of "Papa Doc" and "Baby Doc" Duvalier, which lasted from 1957 until 1986. Since then, Haiti has not been able to build strong and enduring democratic institutions.

Haiti's current president, Michel Martelly, was declared the winner of the 2010 elections, following a runoff in March of 2011. Many people inside and outside of Haiti thought those elections were flawed and unfair.

Haiti is currently facing an electoral crisis because parliamentary and municipal elections are long overdue. These elections should have taken place in November of 2011, but they have not even been scheduled yet. Because of the overdue elections, one third of the seats in the Haitian Senate are vacant. Indeed, it is very difficult for the Senate to meet at all because if even a few Senators are absent, there is no quorum. Meanwhile, President Martelly has appointed mayors to replace the mayors whose terms have expired, but these mayors lack the legitimacy of duly elected mayors.

Elections in Haiti are supposed to be organized by a Permanent Electoral Council (CEP). Haiti's constitution was amended last June to establish a new process for appointing members to the CEP. According to the amended constitution, the three branches of the government – the executive branch, the legislative branch, and the judicial branch – are supposed to appoint three members each to the CEP. So the CEP should have a total of nine members.

The executive and judicial branches have each appointed members to the CEP, although not without controversy. The legislative branch has been unable to appoint members to the CEP because of the fact that one third of the Senate seats are vacant. The remaining Senators are understandably reluctant to vote for permanent members to the CEP.

I understand that President Martelly and parliament are currently working on a compromise agreement whereby a commission will establish a transitional CEP, which will run the next election. Once the vacant Senate seats are filled through this election, a permanent CEP can then be established.

It is obvious that Haiti needs a credible and representative CEP in order to organize free, fair and inclusive elections. And Haiti needs free, fair and inclusive elections in order to have a functioning parliament and a stable, democratic, and effective government.

Haiti will never be able to determine its own future until it develops good governance.