

**PERMANENT MISSION OF INDIA, GENEVA**

**13th Special Session of the Human Rights Council**

**The Support of the Human Rights Council to the Recovery Process  
in Haiti after the Earthquake of 12 January 2010:**

**A Human Rights Approach**

**Wednesday, 27 January 2010**

**Intervention by India**

Mr. President,

India welcomes the holding of the current Special Session of the Human Rights Council focused on Haiti, which is being held with the support of, and in coordination with, the Government of Haiti.

Mr President,

2. While there is no doubt that humanitarian assistance remains the most important and urgent requirement in the country, we believe that there is a significant and immediate *additional* challenge that needs to be addressed and makes the situation *different* from many other cases that are victims of similar natural disasters. This challenge relates to the human rights dimension of the tragedy in the light of the country's recent past, its capacity constraints and the scale of the tragedy – something that has made it imperative that the Council focus on it as a priority, especially as the search and rescue operations are now nearly over, and our attention now turns to the consolidation of responses by the international community and the international organisations to various short-term challenges like food, water, sanitation, shelter, health, nutrition and education.

3. In this regard, Mr President, it is important that the immediate recovery process in the country be guided, *inter alia*, by the basic principles of a rights-based approach with regard to access to humanitarian assistance, while being mindful of the strain imposed on the national authorities by the tragedy. We are, in particular, concerned at the situation of the most

vulnerable sections of the society, especially children, a large number of who have been separated from their families or orphaned and are, thus, in the need of special care. Equally vulnerable is the situation of the disabled and the elderly, as also that of women and girls who need protection from abuse, violence and trafficking. Further, we would also like to emphasise the need to focus on building capacities of local communities *outside* the country's capital, in rural areas, since a large number of displaced people have moved away from the capital to other parts of the country. As for medium- and long-term issues, while it would be desirable to wait for more detailed assessments of the situation on the ground, it is important to underscore our determination for a sustained commitment to the country's recovery, while reiterating the need for a rights-based approach during the rebuilding of the country's governance infrastructure. In this context, we are supportive of the need for an early report by from the High Commissioner for Human Rights identifying areas for cooperation and technical assistance with Haiti. At the same time, we would like to reiterate that our entire approach should be guided by the basic humanitarian assistance principles, including respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity, and consent of the affected country.

Mr President,

4. We have noted the request of the Government of Haiti to postpone its examination under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) to December 2011. While we would normally prefer to maintain the UPR schedule, we would, in view of the extensive damage caused by the calamity, support this request and urge the Council to make an exception in the case of Haiti.

5. Lastly, Mr President, we are encouraged to note the presence of a joint OHCHR-UNHCR protection team on the ground, and we are given to understand that this is the first time that such a joint team has been fielded during a humanitarian crisis. We express our appreciation for the work being done by various NGOs, international and private-sector organisations, and governments to provide humanitarian assistance against overwhelming odds. We would also like to, once again, express our deep condolences to the people and Government of Haiti, as also to the families of those peacekeepers, aid

workers, international civil servants and other good samaritans who perished in the tragedy. India already has a 140-member police unit on the ground assisting the humanitarian efforts. On January 24, India's Minister of State for External Affairs Dr Shashi Tharoor visited Haiti and conveyed the support and solidarity of the people of India to the Haitian government and the people of Haiti. As a token of our solidarity, the Government of India has already pledged an immediate assistance of USD 5 million and stands ready to assist in any measure that is requested by the Government of Haiti. Our delegation looks forward to working with all the members of the Council, and reaffirms its solidarity with the people and Government of Haiti at this hour.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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