

Research Report GA 5 2/3

Issue: Financing and providing humanitarian aid to Haiti

1. Introduction and description of the problem

The Republic of Haiti is a Caribbean country, which alongside with the Dominican Republic occupies the island of Hispaniola. Its capital and seat of government, Port-au-Prince, is situated in the south east of the country; the official languages spoken are Haitian Creole and French.

As it is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, 80% of the population lives under the poverty line and 54% in abject poverty. Two-thirds of all Haitians depend on the agricultural sector, mainly small-scale subsistence farming and therefore remain vulnerable to damage from frequent natural disasters. Haiti lies in the middle of the hurricane belt and is subject to severe storms from June to October with occasional flooding and is also affected by periodic droughts.

Furthermore the Republic of Haiti does not only suffer from natural disasters but has also been plagued by political violence, oppression and economic exploitation for most of its history.

After the President Aristide had been forced by an armed rebellion to resign in February 2004, new elections were to be organized under the auspices of the MINUSTAH. However, continued violence delayed the procedures and only in May of 2006 the democratically elected president Rene Preval inaugurated. Even though the economy has recovered in recent years, registering a positive growth since 2005, Haiti still remains in severe need of humanitarian aid, international security and relies on formal international economic assistance. In 2008, four tropical storms severely damaged the transportation infrastructure and the agricultural sector.

Latest events have now dramatically increased the threats to island and inhabitants: When in the morning of the 12th of January 2010 two tectonic plates collided in the Caribbean Sea, several earthquakes with a force up to 7.0 measured on the Richter scale struck Haiti, destroying most of the country, especially the capital Port-au-Prince, and leaving the inhabitants devastated, homeless and in severe need of help.

First appraisals resulted in an expected number of deaths from around 50.000 to 200.000 and another 3 million people - almost a third of the population - being affected by the tragedy. Up to 30 aftershocks within the following hours further frightened the inhabitants of Port-au-Prince and its surroundings and left even more parts of Haiti's capital destroyed.

The UN sent further troops to Haiti and the representatives of the OCHA as well as the UNPD were within the first to arrive in Port-au-Prince, coordinate the international efforts, assess the damage and scale the tragedy.

The task now is to provide the population with first aid, to cover the need of basic supplies such as water, food, shelter and electricity and to ensure medical supply. Furthermore, security needs to be reinstated. Until the earthquake, US troops have been assisting the Haitians with humanitarian aid, whereas the MINUSTAH has been responsible for public security and civil order.

As a further threat, the danger of epidemics such as typhoid fever and cholera as a consequence of a lack of water and medical supply now arise and a majority of the population is likely to suffer from PTSD after the earthquake.

The OCHA has subdivided different departments of aid into the four clusters “health”, “water”; “nutrition” and “security”.

Nevertheless, the assistance in emergency is not enough for Haiti, since a sustainable development is necessary. Within the discussions the call for a “Marshallplan” for Haiti arose and the UN Secretary-General indicated that it would take a minimum of ten years to rebuild Haiti.

The 5th committee is now urged to find a way to finance and provide humanitarian aid to Haiti in order to ensure a sustainable improvement of living conditions, health, security and economy. Especially for the financing it might be helpful to take a closer look at the funding of UN departments such as the UNDP, the OCHA or the MINUSTAH or the way, other peacekeeping operations from the UN are financed, in order to get a general impression of how international aid is funded.

2. Definition of key terms

OCHA – United Nations *Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs*; the arm of the UN Secretariat which is responsible for ensuring coherent response to emergencies. Mobilises and coordinates effective and principled humanitarian action in partnership with national and international actors. However, the OCHA does not only coordinate aid but also provides material support itself.

UNDP – The United Nations Development Programm helps developing countries attract and use aid effectively

MINUSTAH – United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti; since 2004 about 8000 peacekeepers (a majority from Brasil) maintain civil order in Haiti

PTSD – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder; an emotional illness that usually develops as a result of a terribly frightening or even life-threatening experiences; people suffer from re-experiencing the traumatic event and are likely to be affected by other mental diseases

3. Background information and key events

Short History of Haiti:

In 1804, after a prolonged struggle, Haiti, the former French colony, becomes the first black republic to declare independence. The former colonial powers boycott the young republic though, which leads to beginning of Haiti’s economic breakdown.

From 1915 to 1935 US-troops occupy the country. Despite improvements of the infrastructure, the Haitians oppose their presence.

After the occupation the Duvaliers oppress Haiti for 21 years and on the 16th December of 1990, the first free elections under UN auspices take place and Jean-Bertrand Aristide becomes president. In 1996 he is replaced by René Préval, but during the next elections in 2000 Aristide regains power and almost provokes a civil war. It takes another 4 years until Aristide is exiled and UN peacekeepers, the MINUSTAH and new US troops arrive. US soldiers try to ensure humanitarian aid, whereas the UN troops take on responsibility

for public order, for example by fighting the gangs of Cité Soleil and other slums of Haiti. In 2006, Préval is elected president again. Today, Préval is still president and since 7th November of 2009 Jean-Max Bellerive is the new Prime Minister of Haiti.

International economic assistance (key events):

In 2005, Haiti paid its arrears to the World Bank, smoothing the way for reengagement with the Bank. 4 years later, the country received debt forgiveness for about \$ 525 million of its debt through the Highly-Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) initiative. In 2006 Haiti gained tariff-free access to the US by passing the Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement (HOPE) Act, which was extended in 2008 by a second act dubbed HOPE II. These acts significantly boosted apparel exports and investments.

4. Recent relevant treaties, UN resolutions and actions taken

The Security Council of the UN released a first resolution in 2004, in which they declared the establishment of the MINUSTAH and its tasks, aiming for the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and unity of Haiti.

In October 2009, the Security Council decided to extend the mandate of MINUSTAH until 15th October 2010 with the intention of further renewal.

Furthermore another resolution was passed on 19th January 2010, recommending the increase of overall force levels of MINUSTAH in order to ensure effective and immediate support for Haiti after the earthquake.

(For the actual resolutions, please check the sources and links; 6.)

5. Positions of major countries involved

Of course, this matter affects almost every country and especially the countries being member of the UN. Nevertheless, especially countries that happen to be situated close to Haiti and being able to help distinctively are the USA and the Dominican Republic. Still, the topic should be of concern to every country and every government.

6. Useful sources and links about Haiti:

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html>

resolution passed by the Security Council on Haiti on 13th October of 2009:
[http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1892\(2009\)](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1892(2009))

resolution passed by the Security Council on Haiti in 2004:
[http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1542\(2004\)](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1542(2004))