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Chairman Engel, Ranking Member Mack, members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to be here this morning, and to discuss the ongoing response to the devastating earthquake in Haiti.

InterAction is the largest alliance of U.S. non-profits operating overseas, commonly known as international non-governmental organizations (INGOs). With 192 members operating in every developing country in the world, we work to overcome poverty, exclusion and suffering by advancing basic dignity for all. Our members include service delivery and advocacy organizations, focusing on health, hunger, economic development, the environment, refugee crises, and humanitarian emergencies. Most of their funding comes from the American people and many have an ongoing relationship with the U.S. government. At the height of the humanitarian response to the January 12th earthquake in Haiti, 82 InterAction members were either responding directly or supporting the relief activities of local or other international NGOs on the ground.

The January 12th earthquake was the worst human disaster in modern history in the Western Hemisphere. It left more than 230,000 people dead and an estimated two million homeless. Haiti was already the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere with 80 percent of its people living in abject poverty. For INGOs like those belonging to the InterAction alliance, with experience responding to large scale natural disasters, disaster relief and recovery operations in Haiti are the most difficult in recent memory. InterAction members have been playing a critical role in the aftermath of the disaster, providing life-saving services – setting up mobile clinics, establishing food distribution points, coordinating spontaneous camps housing tens of thousands of the displaced, implementing critical water and sanitation services, and facilitating family reunifications. And despite the grim realities, this response has achieved significant success.

Since the disaster, working with the UN and donor countries, U.S.-based INGOs have contributed to the following significant results:

- More than 1.1 million people have access to safe water—more than did before the disaster.
- More than 4.3 million people have received food.
- More than 1.5 million households received emergency shelter.
- More than 90 percent of people displaced in Port-au-Prince have access to health clinics.
- More than 116,000 people have benefited from short-term employment compared to 14,000 people following the 2004 tsunami.
- Seeds and tools were distributed to more than 74,000 farming households in time for the spring planting season.

These successes are in large part due to coordination among the actors on the ground. Evaluations of the immediate response phase are still ongoing but mid-stream assessments show that, compared to the response to the 2004 South Asia tsunami, there was a greater degree of coordination between the NGO community, the UN, USAID, other U.S. government agencies, and the U.S. military. The UN's cluster system was activated within a week of the disaster; twelve clusters focusing on camp coordination and management, education, shelter, food, logistics, nutrition, protection, water and sanitation (WASH), agriculture, early recovery, emergency telecommunications, and health served as the internal coordination mechanism for the UN/NGO effort. Furthermore, within a few days of the disaster, USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) provided funding for InterAction to open a small NGO coordination office in Haiti. Working with the Geneva-based International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), InterAction set-up this office in the UN logistics base. In addition to day-to-day coordination and troubleshooting, the office hosted weekly meetings to discuss registration, customs, human resources and other issues, facilitated NGO participation in UN coordination systems, and supported the participation of local Haitian organizations in the Post Disaster Needs Assessment and in the March 31st international donors' conference.

Furthermore, over 60 INGOs recently stood up a steering group. These 60 organizations represent a diverse spectrum of the NGO community: some are U.S.-based, others are based in European countries; some have a very large set of operations, others have a relatively small footprint; the group represents a range of relief and recovery activities happening not just in Port au Prince but across the country. The 11 representatives chosen by the 60 INGOs to serve on the steering group will collectively work to nominate a permanent INGO representative to the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission (IHRC). This representative will be accountable to and leverage the collective voice of the INGO community with the IHRC. The steering group will also oversee the NGO Liaison in the UN's Humanitarian Coordinator office.

Coordination in Haiti is a daily challenge. As new transitional camps are created to move displaced families from some of the dangerous make-shift camps, INGOs step in and assume

responsibilities. In one new camp, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) provided the needed camp management services, Concern Worldwide managed the water and sanitation, International Medical Corps its health services, and in order to avoid a further influx of new people seeking services, World Vision agreed to provide programs to support the surrounding communities. Three months after the earthquake, I witnessed CRS managing a food distribution to provide 60,000 people, living in the Delma 34 camp in the Petionville Golf Club, with food for a month. The food came from USAID and the World Food Program, and it was distributed through a managed process that involved hundreds of paid Haitians from the camp, with soldiers from the U.S. 82nd Airborne observing the whole process from a distance.

The response has not been perfect. The complexity of the disaster, the magnitude of problem, and the diversity of actors on ground created a very difficult situation in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake. Another factor is that INGOs and the UN presence in Haiti before the earthquake were almost exclusively staffed by Haitian nationals. The loss and devastation took a tremendous human and emotional toll on this community which meant that the initial relief effort was not immediately at full capacity. The recent report, [*Response to the Humanitarian Crisis in Haiti*](#), completed by the UN's Inter -Agency Standing Committee (IASC) – to which InterAction serves as a standing invitee – outlines the primary achievements and challenges encountered in the initial phase of the humanitarian response. It also proposes lessons which can be learned including, better empowering humanitarian leadership on the ground during the immediate response, stepping up engagement with Haitian civil society and local authorities and ensuring their inclusion in common coordination mechanisms, better preparing for urban responses by adapting existing tools and resources for operations in such environments, and ensuring a better understanding of vulnerability within beneficiary populations.

One persistent criticism of the response relates to the multitude of INGOs that descended upon Haiti in the weeks following the earthquake. Approximately 1,000 NGOs are registered with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Media, policymakers and donors have understandably questioned how all these groups could possibly coordinate with one another and with the Haitian government in an efficient and effective manner. To be sure, particularly during the immediate response phase, the multitude of actors, many of them well-meaning, but lacking a professional skill-set in humanitarian response, contributed to confusion and partly overwhelmed coordination mechanisms on the ground. Several points can bring this issue into clearer focus.

First, the vast majority of these INGOs have been created and are supported by the outpouring of compassion and interest from individual citizens in North America, Europe and elsewhere. Indeed this is the kind of response one might expect to such an unthinkable disaster in the 21st century: moved by media reports, posts on social media sites, stories from friends who have travelled to Haiti, and connections with members of the Haitian diaspora, hundreds of thousands of individuals have been motivated to act on behalf of Haitians affected by the earthquake.

Countless individuals donated to charities which were responding to the devastation. These relatively small \$5, \$10 and \$50 donations have combined with contributions from foundations and the private sector to create a tremendous amount of financial resources: InterAction estimates that U.S.-based INGOs have raised a collective \$1.2 billion in private funds for Haiti relief, recovery and reconstruction; of this, InterAction member organizations – often included in the ubiquitous ‘NGO’ label – have raised approximately \$978 million. A large and diverse collection of community-based organizations, church groups and other actors from around the world are also working in Haiti. These non-state actors and the financial support they’ve garnered directly express the interest and engagement of the American public and private giving from other countries and play a critical role in providing services following a disaster.

Second, while there are hundreds of NGOs responding in Haiti, over 90 percent of the resources are concentrated in 15 organizations. These 15 NGOs and other professional humanitarian organizations are exhibiting a high level of coordination with one another and are in regular communication with relevant ministries and other Haitian government institutions at the national, district and municipal levels. Many of these organizations have had operations in Haiti for decades, have strong bonds with local civil society organizations, and are working with local partner organizations in a collaborative process on recovery and reconstruction plans. Furthermore, 95 percent of the staff of INGOs in Haiti are Haitian. Given this profile, these INGOs are able to develop the capacity of local civil society organizations and facilitate connections between Haitian citizens and their government in order to, in the long-term, make the government more responsive and accountable to its citizens.

Third and finally, it is important to note that within the ranks of NGOs are many local civil society groups and NGOs. The INGO presence in Haiti before the earthquake and in the emergency response following the disaster not only served to fill vital social service gaps but also worked with or alongside local NGOs. As stated previously, the long-term objective of INGOs in the InterAction community is to develop the capacity of local civil society groups and NGOs as well as the Haitian government. Furthermore, the number of local groups in Haiti per capita is still much smaller than that in other countries, including the U.S. where countless independent sector organizations work in harmony with government institutions to provide social services and help hold public officials and institutions accountable. Statements about too many NGOs in Haiti, with some claiming up to 10,000 groups, ignore the fact that a vibrant and thriving civil society and NGO community is the hallmark of healthy democratic governance. Multiple local citizen groups and the influx of charitable and faith-based organizations from the U.S. and Europe, working in partnership with the professional U.S. NGO community, may complicate the job of the Haitian government, but they certainly do not undermine the country’s democracy.

As representatives of the goodwill and compassion of the U.S. and international public and as stewards of valuable private resources, the U.S.-based INGO community is committed to accountability. InterAction is engaging in an effort to provide further transparency to its

members' programs in Haiti. Together with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Business Civic Leadership Center (BCLC) and with funding from FedEx, InterAction is working to develop a web-based mapping platform to bring transparency and accountability to relief and recovery efforts in Haiti. Through this platform, InterAction members and other humanitarian organizations are sharing critical data about resource allocation and programmatic activities deployed in Haiti. The completed mapping platform will provide aggregated information about the different sectors, the financing of projects, and planned spending in Haiti of InterAction's U.S.-based members.

Also, InterAction released its "[Haiti Accountability Report: InterAction Members' Use of Private Funds in Response to the Earthquake in Haiti](#)" on the six-month anniversary of the earthquake. This report provides details for 38 of the 82 INGOs in the InterAction alliance who are managing over 1,000 projects in response to the earthquake. Building back better in Haiti necessitates the U.S.-based INGO community's continuing and accountable engagement in the earthquake stricken country. As part of this project, InterAction and its members are committed to providing the American public and Congress with transparent accounting of how all donations are being used in recovery efforts. The accountability report details how participating INGOs have used private donations in Haiti in the first months after the earthquake.

As attention has largely turned from the emergency phase to recovery and reconstruction, we must remember humanitarian needs will continue into the foreseeable future. Approximately two million Haitians remain displaced and an estimated 1.6 million individuals reside in 1,500 planned or make-shift camps. We must not overlook the continuing needs of these and other disaster-affected Haitians in the clamor to begin reconstruction. Particularly with the uncertainty of the current hurricane season, continued attention is needed to make sure humanitarian response capacities are fully operational.

Of the resources INGOs in the InterAction community have raised to date, approximately \$511 million has been set aside for reconstruction. However, because of the continuing scale of immediate needs, the NGO community is quickly spending the money it's allocated for the emergency phase. To date, out of \$467 million in private funds set aside for the relief effort, U.S.-based INGOs have spent more than \$323 million. The accountability report also details participating INGOs' plans going forward. We worry that in three to four months, INGOs will be compelled to begin drawing on resources that have explicitly been set aside for reconstruction. The international community must continue to support and resource the ongoing humanitarian response. The FY2010 supplemental funding measure is a critical step toward ensuring that USAID's OFDA – our government's frontline international humanitarian entity – has sufficient funding to continue its robust response in Haiti without having to sacrifice its life-saving activities in other parts of the world.

Of course reconstruction planning is also urgently needed. Planning must proceed in order to catalyze the current interest of the international community for sustained attention to the long-

term needs of Haiti. Furthermore, decisive action is necessary to ensure that efforts at this early stage effectively contribute to the long-term goal of “building back better”. Unfortunately, many recovery and reconstruction projects are delayed due to of the need to set up the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission (IHRC) and the weak capacity of the Government of Haiti. Moreover, a complex web of interrelated issues must be untangled before many projects are undertaken. For example, the UN estimates that 200,000 structures fell in the quake creating more than 25 million cubic meters of rubble. Before rebuilding can begin in earnest, rubble removal and other complex issues must be addressed such as land tenure concerns; the fact that many people were never legally declared dead; and, reexamination of building codes with appropriate oversight and enforcement. Specific priorities moving forward include:

- **Resettlement** – As stated previously, there are 1.6 million who are still residing in camps. While President Preval’s creation of a Commission on Resettlement is welcome, a community-based, donor-supported return and resettlement strategy is urgently needed. Such a strategy must acknowledge that enabling the displaced to return involves more than just rebuilding structures. There also needs to be an integrated approach that includes ensuring personal security, facilitating livelihoods, and providing education and other social services in areas of return. Of course some of the displaced will choose not to return to their pre-earthquake neighborhoods. In such cases, donors and INGOs should support the Government of Haiti in making transitional sites permanent and also making land available on which secondary resettlement can occur. Additionally, INGOs should be permitted to rebuild houses on the sites of existing damaged structures.
- **Health and Sanitation** – The reality that all parties must confront is that in some cases, conditions in camps are often better than life in pre-earthquake slums. In order to make health and sanitation conditions that have been achieved in the camps a reality in permanent communities and dwellings, the donor community can help to develop the capacity of the relevant ministries while INGOs provide assistance in building the capacity of frontline clinics and more permanent water and sanitation facilities.
- **Food Security** – Haiti is on the list of priority countries in the U.S. Feed the Future Initiative which is an important commitment by the U.S. government. In designing the Feed the Future implementation strategy for Haiti, the U.S. should ensure that the Government of Haiti has fully engaged with Haitian civil society in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of its Country Investment Plan.

These are the urgent priorities but ones that cannot be solved overnight. As the next several months and years unfold, U.S.-based INGOs will operate within a community-based model of development in line with broad, strategic policies set by the Government of Haiti. To date however, INGOs and others’ ability to move forward has been hampered by an inadequate level

of communication from the Government of Haiti and the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission (IHRC) regarding much needed policy change on urgent issues like land tenure and resettlement.

The IHRC is uniquely positioned to push for progress on such issues. Overall, we believe the IHRC represents a positive step toward ensuring that reconstruction plans are in line with the Haitian government's Action Plan for the National Recovery and Development of Haiti. However, the IHRC is still being set-up and its capacity remains limited. To date, our experience with the IHRC has stood in stark contrast to our community's experience with the UN and the Government of Haiti during the emergency phase. During the immediate response, INGOs were tied in at the highest levels with the UN cluster system; some of our organizations continue to co-chair sector-specific clusters and there continues to be routine access to the UN's Humanitarian Coordinator. But as plans for reconstruction have begun to move forward at the IHRC, NGOs have not been at the policy table and unfortunately much of the planning done to date has taken place without input from the international and local NGO community and Haitian civil society. While the INGO community in Haiti has been granted a seat for an INGO representative on the board of the IHRC, this position has not yet been empowered to play a critical role in the board's collective decision-making. The INGO community stands ready to be a cooperative partner with the Government of Haiti – to invest money in projects according to its plans and, where appropriate, to put money into government institutions. We believe we have a substantive role to play in the work of the IHRC and therefore ask the following:

- **INGOs should be able to detail capable staff to the IHRC.** We understand the tremendous capacity issues that the Haitian government is facing. Having lost a significant portion of its most qualified civil servants, the government was not spared from the devastating effects of the earthquake. Knowing this our community stands ready to second its staff to serve with the IHRC and is otherwise prepared to help develop the capacity of the Government of Haiti.
- **Members of the NGO community should consult routinely with leadership of the IHRC.** As stated previously, INGOs have well-established connections to local communities and are capable of serving as an invaluable resource for the government and the international donor community. At the same time, none of InterAction's members presume to be able to speak for Haitian civil society and NGOs. Therefore the U.S. should push for the fullest possible representation of Haitian civil society and NGOs on the IHRC and related institutions, and the widest possible dialogue between government and local civil society and NGOs.
- **INGOs should provide strategic leadership on sector-specific issues.** The INGO community has been active in Haiti for decades working to support implementation of agriculture, education, water and sanitation, livelihood and health projects; shifting as needed to humanitarian assistance in response to periodic natural disasters. INGOs'

experience in Haiti can serve as an invaluable resource to the host government, leadership of the IHRC and the international donor community on sector-specific strategies.

- **INGOs should be allowed to provide feedback into the function and design of the IHRC's NGO liaison office.** In the spirit of transparency and cooperation, our community is eager to work with the office that has been designated, as part of the IHRC structure, to serve as our portal to the IHRC. In order to make this office function in the most effective and efficient manner, we would like to have a means for providing feedback to its operations and strategic structure. For example, we believe that this office should have a key role in exchanging information, receiving and responding to inquiries and concerns from the public and NGOs, and ensuring NGO program alignment.
- **An appeals process should be a part of the IHRC's project approval framework.** Our community understands the need for the Government of Haiti to oversee and coordinate the multitude of recovery and reconstruction projects. However, we ask the Government of Haiti, donors and other stakeholders to ensure that implementation of programs and delivery of services to individual beneficiaries and beneficiary communities and institutions of the INGO programs' are not unduly delayed or hampered. Furthermore, we would like to see an appeals process as a formal part of the IHRC's project approval framework. The NGO liaison office is best-placed to coordinate this process and could have an express mandate to examine and redress delays in NGO registration and in importation of goods. The office should also be able to receive appeals by NGOs against adverse decisions by IHRC.

As the UN cluster system is phased out, U.S.-based INGOs hope that the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission (IHRC) will become an effective mechanism for coordination between actors in the intermediate recovery phase and a catalyst for moving forward on much needed policies to oversee efforts. Over time though, the IHRC should be replaced by more permanent coordination and strategic structures: ideally, the Haitian government's own line ministries. Accomplishing this hand-off effectively will mean developing the capacity of the Government of Haiti – a long-term proposition that will take years of sustained and strategic investment on the part of the donor community. U.S.-based INGOs stand ready and willing to be a part of the success of this long-term goal. We are committed to not only serving the needs of the population but working in concert with and in support of the Government of Haiti.

In conclusion, the INGOs in our community are carefully budgeting their resources to meet the requirements of the three phases of disaster response. For every \$2 used during the first two: relief and recovery, approximately \$6 will be needed for reconstruction. Many U.S.-based INGOs are committed to working in Haiti until permanent housing is built, roads have been cleared of rubble, and every child has a school to attend with teachers.

Chairman Engel, Ranking Member Mack, members of the Subcommittee, I thank you for the opportunity to testify today on this important issue. I am happy now to answer any questions you have.