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Two years after the outbreak of cholera in Haiti, access to clean water and sanitation is desperately needed

October 22, 2012, Washington, D.C. – On the second anniversary of the outbreak of the cholera epidemic in Haiti, human rights groups, faith-based organizations, policy institutes, and humanitarian organizations renew their call for the United Nations and U.S. government to help Haiti install the clean water and sanitation infrastructure necessary to control the ongoing epidemic.

The cholera epidemic in Haiti has received less U.S. attention during the presidential campaign season, but it remains a critical problem for this Caribbean neighbor that is not being adequately addressed and is undermining broader aid efforts. Last month, 260 new cholera cases were reported daily, and 2-3 children died a day. Since the epidemic broke out in October 2010, 7,564 Haitians have reportedly died from cholera and some 600,000 persons (6% of the Haitian population) have been infected. The number is undoubtedly much higher, as cases in more remote areas are often unreported. As the World Health Organization has stated, those without access to safe drinking water, proper sanitation, and hygiene constitute the majority of cholera cases.

Two years after the epidemic started, not enough action has been taken to assist the Government of Haiti in acquiring essential water and sanitation infrastructure. A regional coalition that includes the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the World Health Organization is developing a plan with the Government of Haiti to build water and sanitation systems that will cost \$2.2 billion. Despite this encouraging progress, the plan still needs to be finalized and funded before implementation can begin.

The U.N. especially has a legal and moral responsibility to play a leadership role in helping end the epidemic. Independent scientific studies have established that cholera was brought to Haiti by troops from the U.N. Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and that the waste disposal practices at the U.N. base allowed the bacteria to contaminate Haiti's largest river system. The undersigned groups call on the U.N. to commit long-term resources to work with the Government of Haiti to build water and sanitation systems that are critical to halting the continued spread of the disease.

This July, 104 members of Congress sent a letter to Susan Rice, U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., requesting that she urge the world body to act decisively to address Haiti's cholera crisis. Congressional members

Chris Smith and Albio Sires made a similar plea to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. The undersigned groups urge Ambassador Rice and Secretary Clinton to fulfill these important appeals and to call on the U.N. to help Haiti acquire the necessary funding to develop the water and sanitation infrastructure needed to stop the epidemic.

Signatory Groups:

Alternative Chance

American Jewish World Service

Canada Haiti Action Network

Center for Economic and Policy Research

Center for Gender & Refugee Studies

Environmental Justice Initiative for Haiti

Grassroots International

Hastings to Haiti Partnership

Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti

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