

Haiti Consultative Group Thematic Points of Meeting Number Two

On April 26, 1991, Creative Associates International, Inc. hosted the second Haiti Consultative Group. The following issues and themes were raised at the meeting:

Sense of Justice, Human Rights and Democracy

- A strong sense of personal insecurity continues to pervade Haitian society. This uncertainty inhibits the process of democratization and economic planning. Justice remains a crucial element in building the self-confidence needed to work towards democratization and economic recovery. An overall sense of justice has a great multiplier effect.
- Though the December elections were the freest in Haitian history, elections by themselves do not create a democracy. A democratic environment will require the removal of fear as a defining element of Haitian politics. Instances of intimidation and retribution continue and retard the process of democratization and limit the growth of political pluralism. Democracy as envisioned by the Haitian people in their Constitution envisions a full range of human rights. These rights were protected at a sufficient level to hold the election, but their further protection and promotion is uncertain. No one can be sure if the strong-man tradition, prevalent throughout Haitian political history, will be constrained by the norms of Constitutional government.
- Policy related to reforming or curtailing the Haitian military will require great care. It should be remembered that despite the overwhelming popular support for the elections, the military ultimately "allowed" them to take place. It would be an error to underestimate the challenge the Aristide/Preval government faces in redefining and restructuring the Haitian military as called for in the Constitution. The Aristide/Preval government may require assistance in carrying out these reforms and structuring a positive and constitutional role for the military.
- Democratization and development of Haiti is necessarily a long and slow process. The people of Haiti will intensify demands for democracy as they gain more self-confidence. Grassroots democracy is already in place in many parts of Haiti and has significantly and positively impacted on the self-confidence of the people. Donors should be encouraged to assist bottom-up development, especially

in the countryside. Too often, large bi-lateral and multi-lateral organizations have the tendency to work from the top-down. Top-down efforts do not work towards empowerment which is necessary if democratization is to proceed.

Supporting Democracy and Economic and Political Planning in Haiti

- Allocations of assistance impact on who gets how much of what, where, when and how, and thus are inherently political. However, the task is to help Haiti in the here and now while concurrently validating the democratic processes which have yielded the Aristide/Preval government.
- Though the donor countries should not see the Aristide/Preval government as the primary client of assistance, it is in everyone's interest to assist the current government in institutionalizing democracy, meeting its constitutional obligations, and bringing about economic recovery in Haiti. If the elected government does not succeed, people may lose hope that democratic processes can deliver progress towards a better life. Voters who went to the polls on December 16, 1990, opted overwhelmingly for candidates who they perceived as representing the most radical departure from the "old way" of doing business. The present political leadership will be judged by the Haitian people based upon the standard of bringing about this change. While the Aristide/Preval government continues to enjoy popularity, its standing will be determined by the program it develops and implements.
- When a government is elected as overwhelmingly as the Aristide/Preval government, expectations are often unrealistically high and tolerance for failure low. Additionally, overwhelming electoral support can lead to an arrogance of legitimacy, accompanied by abuses of power.
- Government administration in Haiti has traditionally been fragile. The Aristide/Preval government comes to power lacking governmental experience. It also may be reluctant to seek and accept help. Donors should be in a "ready" mode, prepared to respond to requests for counsel and help on the basis of mutual respect and cooperation.
- Planning to accomplish short and long-term goals and objectives is crucial. Haiti may require assistance in executing this planning function. Donors should evaluate assistance and planning with patience and with recognition of the daunting problems facing post Duvalier Haiti.

- The establishment of a positive working relationship with the Aristide/Preval government may be enhanced by diplomats and other interlocutors with the capability and background to utilize a language that communicates an understanding and empathy for the experience and suffering of the Haitian people.
- Haiti can be assisted by its inclusion in regional bodies, and by steps taken by Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Organization of American States (OAS) to support democracy and development.
- The Aristide/Preval government's economic theories appear to be quite different from those of the donor community. It will be necessary for both donors and the government of Haiti to conduct a dialogue which can move beyond rigid thinking trapped by abstract models and ideology. Theory and models should be subordinated to meeting the urgent needs of the Haitian people.
- The Aristide/Preval administration should be encouraged to implement a program that will enable Haitians living abroad to contribute to Haiti's recovery. The diaspora's experience and knowledge could offer much to the public and private sectors and subsequent reform projects.
- The need for an overall Haitian development plan with goals and timetables is seen as crucial to the success of the government in undertaking a program of economic recovery. Donors should help Haiti in defining what is needed as opposed to what is wanted. The traditional "laundry list" approach, through which Haitian governments have selected from a list of donor offerings has not yielded successful results. A continuation of the "laundry list" approach would represent "business as usual" and continue Haiti's status as a country of projects but -- not development.

Short-term and Long-term Needs and Planning

- Assistance to Haiti should be a two-track effort; short- and long-term needs assessment and planning. There are numerous ways by which this might be accomplished.
- In the short-term, it is necessary to demonstrate improvement in the lives of people, thus helping to validate democratic processes. Efforts such as cleaning the city, painting schools and public buildings and repairing physical infrastructure has the capacity to contribute to a positive atmosphere in which

success builds upon success. Short-term projects can also provide employment. This immediate satisfaction can provide people with an opportunity to earn wages and can result in visible improvements. Satisfaction from short-term projects can help increase acceptance of and patience for planning for future long-term projects. Short-term projects should support the long-term goals.

- Long-term projects are central to developing Haiti. There is an acute need for human resource development, particularly in the areas of health and education. Frequently, international donors will fund either short- or long-term projects; rarely both. Supporting both will make each one more effective than if they were done without the other.
- It is important to be able to distinguish short-term from long-term needs. For example, it is to Haiti's benefit to develop a long-term solution to its energy needs, rather than rely on costly, though more readily available, short-term solutions such as a rented generator barge.

Guidelines for the Donor Community in Assisting Haiti

- The Haitian Constitution of March 29, 1987 is the Haitian peoples' blueprint for democratic transformation. It is a document which should guide bi- and multi-lateral diplomatic and economic relations with Haiti.

The Advantages of Multi-Lateral Assistance vs. Bi-Lateral Assistance

- Multi-lateral organizations have great potential for assisting Haiti in its transformation process.
- South-to-South assistance also offers great possibilities for pertinent technical cooperation. It may be helpful to reinforce contacts and linkages between Haiti and Latin America, Africa and the Caribbean to further the transference of appropriate technology and relevant experience.
- The International Development Bank (IDB), because of present leadership, significant resources and commitment to Haiti, is situated to play a leading role in assisting Haiti on the road to economic recovery. The Organization of American States (OAS) is also a potential source of assistance having played a major role in support of the recent election and is most anxious to assist Haiti.