

Rebuilding Haiti's Competitiveness and Private Sector

March 16, 2010

Representative Meeks Prepared Remarks

Before I begin, I would like to thank Representative Miller, the ranking member of this subcommittee, for his help in planning this hearing, and to express again my gratitude for our ability to work in a truly bipartisan manner in seeking solutions to the critical situation in Haiti. This hearing is the second in a series of hearings on the situation in Haiti. I was thrilled to see such strong bipartisan support last week for the Haiti debt relief bill, which passed with unanimous support out of the full house, following its passage out of this subcommittee. Finally, I want to reiterate my sincere thanks to Chairman Frank and Ranking Member Bachus, for their continued support for Haiti and the work of this subcommittee, and especially thank Representative Bachus for his truly

touching remarks on the floor of the house last week, in support of the Haiti debt relief bill.

Now, I would like to thank our panel of witnesses for appearing here today, and for sharing their thoughts and experience on rebuilding Haiti's competitiveness and private sector. Haiti's recovery will happen in three distinct, if overlapping phases. Phase one consists of the crisis response, focused on basic survival needs, which began in the hours immediately following the devastating earthquake of January 12, 2010. Phase one is likely to be ongoing for some time, particularly for the most vulnerable groups in Haiti. Phase two, which is in its very early stages of development today, consists of rebuilding the basic physical and governance infrastructure of Haiti. This phase will take several years to complete, but must get under way quickly as it is critical to allowing the government and the people of Haiti to get back to work, and to regain some minimal sense of normalcy.

Phase three, the plan for which is being developed today, and is a continuation of extensive work already underway prior to the earthquake, consists of implementing a long-term economic strategy for Haiti, allowing it to grow prosperous, and to move beyond the dependency on aid which has characterized the country for decades.

As our witnesses will address here today, much of the preparatory work for phase three was already being done prior to the earthquake, under the leadership of President Préval. These plans have been modified as a consequence of the earthquake, but not fundamentally changed.

It is my hope that today's hearing, and the testimony of our panel of witnesses, will shed some light on how we can empower Haitian institutions and the private sector to enable the successful and rapid progression of Haiti from phase one, crisis response mode, where it is today, to phases two and three of long-term economic planning, in a

manner that lays the foundation for a new, sustainable, stable, and prosperous Haiti, providing hope and opportunity for all its population, and not just a privileged elite. I also look forward to hearing about how we can ensure effective coordination of the multitude of development efforts, including especially the multilateral and international development institutions, under the leadership and stewardship of the Haitian people themselves, as they build a future in accordance to their plans, their culture, and their vision of a resurgent Haiti.