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One Hundred and Thirteenth Congress  
**Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission**

**Statement of Rep. James P. McGovern**  
**Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Hearing**  
**“Aid Delivery in Haiti: Development Needs, Capacity Building, and**  
**Challenges”**  
**HVC-210 Capitol Visitor Center - Wed, Dec 3, 2014 - 12:00 PM – 1:30 PM**

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Good afternoon. Today, the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission will examine an issue that has challenged the aid delivery and development community for decades: the immediate needs that must be met today and development strategies that must be undertaken for long-term capacity building in Haiti.

This hearing comes at a critical juncture not just for Haiti, but for how development work is undertaken around the world. As the world bears witness to the Ebola crisis in West Africa, it is clear that epidemics, including the cholera crisis in Haiti, can cripple weak public health systems with devastating consequences and profound geopolitical and economic implications.

Following the earthquake in 2010, the international community promised to help Haiti to build back better. However, many Haitians today feel that this promise has not been upheld and are alienated by development processes that often lock them out of policy development. There is frustration that more progress and widespread development has not been achieved.

This frustration has pushed those of us in the donor community to do some soul searching and thinking about what lessons can be learned, and what things can be done differently in the future. Among the things that I think we have learned, is that local voices must have a stronger place in discussions about what development projects should be pursued. No one can better inform the donors about what is needed in a community than the community affected.

In addition, we must ensure that the implementation of development and reconstruction programs is subject to public oversight in a way that ensures Haitians have opportunities to participate and are invested in the outcomes that emerge from development projects. The needs and wishes of the people are first in forging a sustainable reconstruction process, with a more decentralized, participatory framework and whose outcomes establish more social equality.

Respect for human rights is fundamental to any long-term strategy. Breaking the country out of its dependency on foreign aid and bringing it out of deep, systemic poverty requires a rethinking of the relationship between economic security and human rights. 76 percent of the population earns less than the equivalent of 2 U.S. dollars a day and 60 percent earn less than one dollar a day. Attention to the economic situation of Haitians must consider gender-equality targets in development goals, including by expanding programs beyond those that are focused on social and economic sectors traditionally dominated by men.

Greater oversight and transparency are also critical. Over the last 5 years, too many of funds were directed into projects that had little oversight and no long-term strategy. Haiti already had weak public institutions before the earthquake, and afterwards there was even less to work with. But despite the temptation to do things ourselves, we must keep our eye on the long-term and put resources into building local institutions and making those institutions accountable. The US Government's post-earthquake development plans to strengthen Haitian government institutions and increase their capacity are thus laudable and should serve as guiding principles for future plans.

Further, in order to alleviate the great economic insecurity of the vast majority of Haitians, development must focus on more than one sector and be located within the broader context of good governance. Without addressing the ongoing political instability, we will not be able to address economic or social issues. This worsening constitutional crisis is unfortunately tied to aid discussions.

If parliamentary elections in Haiti do not take place before January 12, 2015, President Martelly will begin to rule by decree, a shift in power that many experts believe looks likely. We must work with the Haitian parliament and President Martelly to chart a course for free and fair elections to take place. The last thing anyone wants is rule by decree in Haiti. On the other hand, inaction in the Haitian parliament has helped to lead to the current predicament.

Escalating unrest could undo all of the development work and gains made since the 2010 earthquake. The Haitian private sector does not have the capital for development in Haiti and it is becoming increasingly difficult for outside investors to open shop as elections face further delay.

Politics may be a zero sum game, but development work is not. While the government must be accountable for this crisis, we also cannot make funding allocation strictly contingent on certain milestones. While the government itself is not permanent, state institutions themselves can last and will continue to need improvements. Further, the willingness of the government to bear a negative impact due to noncompliance has been proven time and again. Rather, we must think of what kinds of carrots can be used to bring about the kind of actions needed for capacity-building and what can be done to insulate development work from political uncertainty if this crisis is further exacerbated.

In closing, I want to use this time to consider lessons learned in Haiti and the development strategy today, almost 5 years after the earthquake – not just what projects should be taken on or which regions should be prioritized – but looking at equality of

opportunity, rights-based funding, and community participation. Human rights, basic human dignity and development are intimately intertwined. It is this intersection between rights, capacity and development that we hope to explore today, to the advancement of each.