



**Women's Foreign Policy Group  
Institute of International Education  
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**Sir John Holmes**

Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and  
Emergency Relief Coordinator for the United Nations

*The UN's Humanitarian Response to Haiti*

**Daniela Kaisth:** Welcome. It's so wonderful to be in a room full of women and just a couple men. [*Laughter.*] I'm Daniela Kaisth, Vice President of Strategic Development at the Institute of International Education. We are really thrilled to welcome the Women's Foreign Policy Group. We have a great partnership with this wonderful group that we appreciate very much.

Before I turn things over to the program, I thought I would give you a tiny taste of what the Institute does in terms of emergency student and scholar relief, including a little bit about what we've done in Haiti. IIE was founded in 1919, so we're more than 90 years old. You may know us from international exchange programs, such as Fulbright—that's what we're really well-known for—that we administer on behalf of the US Department of State. But throughout our history, we've helped students and scholars in crises throughout the world. You may have noticed coming in that there's a board of Nobel Prize Winners associated with the Institute. Some of those are actually scholars IIE rescued in the 1930s, such as Thomas Mann and Felix Bloch. We do student and scholar emergency assistance. We have a program called the Scholar Rescue Fund which has helped 360 scholars from 43 countries over the past eight years and I'd be glad to tell you about it later. Just one quick word about Haiti: we do raise money in emergencies and try to help international students who are stranded as a result of international disasters. What we did after the earthquake in Haiti was we quickly raised a fund of about a quarter of a million dollars—most of it from the Institute's reserve funds—and, within a span of about three weeks, we gave it out to Haitian students in the United States. They were very quick grants to help them continue their education. So that's the type of work that we do and I'd be glad to tell you more about it. Thank you for being here and welcome.

**Patricia Ellis:** Thanks so much, Daniela. It's great to be back here at IIE. We really appreciate your hospitality and the opportunity to meet here and cosponsor another program. Good afternoon and welcome to everyone. I'm Patricia Ellis, President of Women's Foreign Policy Group, which promotes women's leadership and voices and dialogue on pressing international issues of the day. Certainly Haiti is one of them. We've been doing a number of programs on Haiti—a couple in Washington and now this very special program—and we're just honored to have Sir John Holmes with us today. In terms of New York, every year we hold a UN conference

and in 2007, Sir John spoke to us. We also have Author Series and international issues programs. We have a lot going on, so we'll look forward to seeing you again in the future.

Today we're talking about the UN's humanitarian response to the Haitian earthquake of last January and we have the best person to be talking to about it. Sir John Holmes, who is Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator for the UN, has been the point person coordinating this. He also was in charge of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, which brings together different agencies working on decision-making on these issues. He's been to Haiti four times. He went there four days after the earthquake and was there last week on Monday and Tuesday taking stock six months after the earthquake. While he was there, he did a variety of things which he will talk to you in more depth about. He went to a large camp for displaced persons that was a leader's residence, where he met with women, met with the UN Mission and UN community donors, and with the President of Haiti. He will be talking about the progress to date and the challenges that lie ahead.

Before I just tell you a little bit more about the highlights of his impressive career, I want to recognize our board member, Gillian Sorensen, who is here with us. Now I'd like to tell you a few things about Sir John. He was a career foreign service officer, was ambassador to Paris and to Lisbon, served in Moscow and New Delhi, was the British G8 Sherpa and Principal Private Secretary for Tony Blair, and also served in a similar role for Prime Minister Major. He's had an impressive career. In 1999 he was awarded a knighthood for his role in the Northern Ireland peace process and Good Friday Agreement. Over the years, he has been very active in working on the Middle East peace process. This summer, he will be returning to the UK and he will be directing the Ditchley Foundation. Please join me in welcoming Sir John Holmes.

**Sir John Holmes:** Well thank you very much indeed and thank you for inviting me this lunchtime to talk to you again after 2007. As you said, I will try and talk about Haiti. I don't have a speech to read, which has some advantages and some disadvantages. The advantage is that it's—I hope—a bit more informal. The disadvantage is that sometimes you go on too long without meaning to, so I'll try not to do that, because I think it'd be more interesting in many ways to have an exchange. Everybody was following Haiti and I'm sure everybody has views and questions. But let me just try to cover some of the main points reasonably briefly.

I've actually been to Haiti five times. It's four times since the earthquake, but I went there before in 2008 for the previous disaster that happened. It was when Haiti was struck by four consecutive hurricanes and tropical storms in September, October, and November of 2008 and was in a very bad state as a result. I think it's important to recognize that the earthquake didn't come from nowhere and the disaster didn't come from nowhere; it was all hitting a country which is already very disaster-prone and in a very poor state in all sorts of ways. That's a very obvious point to make and everybody's aware that, in a sense, this is the poorest country in the western hemisphere. But I think it is important to recognize because it had a big impact on what we were able to do. The sort of dysfunctional state that Haiti had fallen into even before this earthquake, because of a whole lot of factors having to do with poor governance, poverty, underdevelopment, and so on—corruption, obviously, as well. This meant that a large part of the population was already living in very vulnerable conditions, very vulnerable to natural disasters, whether they be

hurricanes or floods or, of course, earthquakes, to which Haiti's always been prone. So that's part of the background to the earthquake, which you need to bear in mind.

The other point to bear in mind about the Haiti earthquake is that it's the second deadliest earthquake in 100 years—not necessarily the second biggest, because it depends very much on what it hits, but in terms of the death toll. We don't really know what the death toll was, but the figure is 220,000 and there's no real reason to dispute that, plus of course the same number or more injured. But the reason for that is that it struck the capital city and the main concentration of population in Haiti. It struck a city that was incredibly vulnerable because it was overpopulated and over-congested, with a lot of buildings built very badly and far too close together. And a lot of cliffs, because it's a very hilly city, Port-au-Prince, for those of you who haven't been there. It's squeezed between the mountains and the sea and it's very congested; there's not a lot of space to expand. Some of the areas where there were very, very high concentrations and very, very poorly built buildings were just incredibly vulnerable to the kind of disaster that happened and incredibly vulnerable to rainfall and cyclones as well as earthquakes, which helps to explain the extent of the devastation and the extent of the lives lost.

The other important point is that it struck the capital. So the effect of that was that the government itself—not the strongest government in the world to start with obviously—was effectively incapacitated for some time after the earthquake. Seventeen of the eighteen ministries were actually destroyed and 18,000 civil servants were killed. They were probably the most capable civil servants because they were the ones still at work when it struck slightly after working hours had finished. They were probably the ones—the senior ones, the conscientious ones—who may have still been at their desks. That's a big generalization, but you know what I mean. So the government was effectively out of action after the earthquake struck. The state wasn't the strongest government in the first place. But all of the other organizations that would normally respond to an event like this—the fire brigade, the health service, the police—were massively hit themselves. The UN, of course, suffered very badly because the UN had quarters there and the UN peacekeeping mission collapsed. Various NGOs were also very badly hit.

So it was the most unpromising situation in which to have to face a disaster of this kind. I say that not to make excuses but it just is important to recognize the difficult situation we were confronted with on the evening of the 12<sup>th</sup> of January. There were not a lot of normal responders because the first responders are always the local people—we always talk about the international community as the ones who do everything but we don't, we're always on the team as fast as we can but the first people there helping people, pulling them out of the rubble, are the neighbors, the local people. Of course they were there too in Haiti, but the other organizations which might be able to help—as I said, the emergency services, NGOs—were all so devastated themselves, they were virtually unable to respond. Compounded by the fact that certainly during the first days the roads were blocked by rubble and bodies and so on. The airport was actually not badly damaged but not functioning right at the beginning. The port was very badly damaged, and the roads in from the outside world needed to be cleared. So there were a lot of things conspiring together to make it very difficult to respond. Plus the fact that you had a very vulnerable, very poor population living in very poor conditions to start with.

So that was the context in which we were trying to respond. This is one of those disasters which was a massive media event like when Indonesia was hit by the tsunami five years before. This has two consequences: one is that it's much easier to raise money because everybody's focused on it and the amount of money you can raise individually from people watching these horrible scenes on television is much higher, and two, you're also operating under massive media scrutiny in a way that you may not be in certain other disasters. So there's extra pressure on everybody.

What we were trying to do from the beginning was to make sure that people had the basics. No actually, first of all, to make sure that people were rescued. This is actually the most successful international search and rescue operation probably ever conducted in the sense that, very often after these events, you see on your televisions search and rescue teams coming from outside with the bells and the equipment and men in reflecting jackets and all that stuff and it looks fantastic but actually, they don't rescue anybody because it's normally too late. But in this case, 130 people were pulled from the rubble, including some, as you may remember, quite a long time after—a miraculously long time after—the actual earthquake. I think there were probably 64 search and rescue teams on the ground at the maximum point. One of the things we needed to do was organize that. We put a team on the ground very quickly—they were there within 24 hours, a team of 14—to try to organize that first phase, that search and rescue phase, to make sure that not everybody was going to the same area, that they spread out in an even way, that they covered not only Port-au-Prince, but the towns outside as well. So that was the first priority.

The second priority was obviously getting the medics inside because most of the health infrastructure had been destroyed or badly damaged. The doctors and nurses who would normally be there—and many of them were there—had all been badly affected by the earthquake themselves; they were worried about their families, going to rescue their families, and so on. So extra complications. Therefore we needed to get in quite a lot of field hospitals, to get in as fast as they could. Medical teams from around the world came in. Quite hard to coordinate and organize that too, but the second priority after rescuing people is to treat the injured and with all the terrible issues—you will remember the amputations, between 4,000 and 6,000 amputations were probably carried out in Haiti, and there's a controversy about whether that was too many and whether they were carried out under the right conditions, but those on the spot at the time didn't have a lot of choices if they were going to save people's lives. But of course that was a terrible thing, they needed a huge amount of after-care, they need a lot of care now actually, but that's perhaps a different subject.

So those are the two first priorities. Then you need to start making sure that the basics are there. These are all happening in parallel by the way; they're not sequential. To make sure people have got food, they've got clean water, and then they've got shelter. Food took a little bit of time to organize because there were not food stocks in the country of any significance. In fact, the food stocks the World Food Programme had in Port-au-Prince were in warehouses which had been so badly affected by the earthquake they couldn't really be entered because they were so unsafe. But nevertheless, after about a week or ten days, enough food began to come in that the basics could start to be provided for people. That operation lasted essentially a couple of months to give people the basics. Four million people were fed during that time and kept alive.

Food is not the first thing you need because people can survive without food for a few days. Clean water is the first thing. Luckily there—although most people in Haiti didn't have clean water to start with, there was not a very effective functioning water system—some of the actual water production systems were not so badly damaged by the earthquake so they were functioning. So water was able to be got from the tankers and the people who need it—something like 1.2 million people—have been kept basically supplied with clean water, which was a massive operation. Tankering water is not what you want to do because it's incredibly expensive and not very sustainable. On the other hand, it's a lot better than bottled water. Bottled water is something you may need to use at the beginning, but again it's very expensive and actually the bottles become a major problem themselves. You go to Port-au-Prince and they're clogging up the drainage everywhere; plastic bottles do not go away.

Anyway, the food and the water are obvious basics and they took a little bit of time to organize but eventually we got there. The biggest problem we had really, and still the biggest problem in many ways, is shelter. Something like 1.5 million people were made homeless by the earthquake, either because their homes are destroyed or because the homes are so badly damaged they're unlivable or because in some cases, even if the houses weren't destroyed, people were so traumatized after the earthquake and the aftershocks—of which there were very many—that they weren't going to go back and live there in the foreseeable future. That's still a problem, that trauma, which you can understand.

So the problem was what to do with people who'd been displaced. Again, Port-au-Prince is a city that's a problem from this point of view because there's not much space there. The city is squeezed between the mountains and the sea. What we quickly discovered is where there are flat areas where you think you might be able to create a camp, they're usually empty for a reason and it's actually because they flood very badly in the rainy season. So you need to be very careful where you put camps. We quickly decided not to build a whole lot of big camps outside the city because (a) there was no space and (b) people wanted to stay near where they lived, they did not want to abandon their properties and their possessions, and they did not want to go and live in a camp somewhere else. So for a combination of reasons we decided to live with what was happening already, which was people settling wherever they could, in any open space in Port-au-Prince. So the stadiums, the parks, and anywhere where there were destroyed buildings and there was a bit of space was quickly occupied by people just living in whatever way they could.

So the only way to respond to that that we could find was to provide them with tents, or even better than tents—because tents always sound like the solution but tents are rather small and families are quite big, and they're actually not very robust, they don't last very long—are tarpaulins, plastic sheets, with ropes and wood and fixings to enable people to construct some kind of shelter for themselves. Sometimes they used part of the destroyed building because you get a bit more space and the tarpaulin is a lot more robust than the average tent is, let's put it that way. But a combination of tents and tarpaulins. It took a long time to mobilize and get into the country and distribute enough of those materials. It took us probably three or four months to make sure that everybody had at least one tent or two tarpaulins. That actually is still continuing because the tents and tarpaulins get destroyed by the sun, the wind, and the rain quite quickly and there's a constant need for supplies. We've supplied enough for two million people now, which is about 80,000 tents probably and 600,000 or 700,000 tarpaulins. That effort is continuing

because the need is still there. The people are in something like 1,300 sites around Port-au-Prince and the surroundings where they settled. Some are very big—50,000 or 60,000 people—some are very small—a few hundred. That's where they are now, still—including those conditions that I'll come back to in a minute.

But this response was complicated by the problem I was talking about earlier: the logistical issues of getting the supplies in there quickly enough and then distributing them in an effective way with a local society or a local capacity which had been largely destroyed. I think that that explains why there was a lot of criticism at the time of how slow it all was—more slow in some respects, particularly the shelter. We were all frustrated by that, but it wasn't through lack of attention or lack of competence. It simply was very difficult. I have to say, for reasons that are a bit difficult to explain, that for virtually any humanitarian organization working in Haiti, whether they're the UN or NGOs, Haiti is an almost uniquely difficult context in which to make things happen quickly. There are all sorts of reasons for that, but it's a problem which we're still grappling with, even now.

But if we look back six months later at what we achieved, I think we can say that we have provided the basic minimum. When I say we, I mean the international humanitarian community, which is of course UN agencies, the NGOs—which are hugely important, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement—plus of course the members of government themselves, who were doing what they could during this time, and the military actors who were there, particularly the American forces, who were hugely important, for all sorts of reasons in logistical terms—running the airport, preparing the port, bringing in some supplies, transporting other supplies, and helping to do all kinds of things—and the Canadians were there as well and the UN peacekeeping force, who was very much a part of that too. So with the combination of all those efforts, we were able to provide the minimum in terms of food, clean water, shelter, medical care, and emergency education, to a large extent, for six months. A lot of children are back at school; not in the schools they came from, because they were mostly destroyed, but in large tents or open spaces or whatever can be provided. Bear in mind that half of the children of Haiti did not go to school before the earthquake—it's an astonishing fact—and schooling in Haiti is not free; it's mostly provided by the private sector for payment, like healthcare, and free healthcare was not there before.

But it's six months on and those basics have been provided—not perfectly by any stretch of the imagination, but have been provided. The main consequence of that is that we did not have a second disaster of any kind. We have not had any epidemics, you know the kind you always fear in these circumstances, not least when you have a very tropical climate and a rainy season which is fully underway in Haiti at the moment. A lot of disease surveillance efforts are being made to make sure that doesn't happen; they're continuing to unveil a vaccination campaign that they've undertaken. So after six months, the basics are there and I think we did a reasonable job at the basics, but the challenges are enormous and they're not by any stretch of the imagination gone.

I was able to see that on my last visit. I was gone on Tuesday of last week; I went to one of the big camps, as you said, that's got about 48,000 people in it. It's on a site which had been identified for a sporting complex but was simply taken over by the population because it's very near some of the heavily populated areas of Port-au-Prince. I also went to another part of Port-

au-Prince called Fort National—which is actually a very hilly area of the city—where the devastation was huge and where the rubble clearance problems are enormous. What you could see in the camps was that people have just about got the basics. Food distributions have stopped except for the most vulnerable communities because the government did not want to undermine local agriculture by carrying it on for too long. But food is there, clean water is there, shelter is there, up to a point. But the conditions are not good for people. The shelters are very basic shelters still, and the camps are dangerous places now. They'd been from the beginning dangerous places for women—Haiti was not a very safe place for women in the first place—with all the sexual violence, including internal family violence. But there are opportunities for sexual violence and rape and so on in camps, which are very crowded, very often badly lit, the normal disciplines have broken down—all those things that you can imagine. Those problems are compounded by the fact that there is a—and I was a bit shocked by this—degree of intimidation inside the camps from local gangs who want to control the camps and who want to control who gives aid in the camps. They do that by demanding money from the agencies which are providing help in the camps. If they don't get money, they make it very difficult indeed for these agencies and NGOs to work in the camps. These are not safe places by any stretch of the imagination. So people are legitimately asking, "How long am I going to be in this camp?" which is a very difficult question to answer and we'll come back to that in a minute.

The other place I went was the Fort National area where there is a big effort underway to try to clear some of the rubble. Rubble removal is a difficult thing to conceive of if you haven't actually seen the amount of rubble in Port-au-Prince. People have been removing rubble for six months now and lorries are passing backwards and forwards all day and there are lots of people who are being paid to break it up and to put it into smaller bits and so on. But all those efforts so far in six months have removed 250,000 cubic meters of rubble. There are 20 million cubic meters of rubble in Port-au-Prince. So the task is absolutely gigantic; they've literally scratched the surface of it so far. So at the second area that I went to—which is a very hilly area where a lot of properties had collapsed because they were very badly built and very close together and a lot of people died there and they're still discovering bodies even now—there is a big effort underway to clear some of the rubble, to clear some space, so you can put some proper shelters on there, transitional shelters made out of wood, metal sheeting, and properly put together. They're not permanent housing but they're able to last two or three years and they're much more rain-resistant and they're much more hurricane-resistant than tents and tarpaulins. So the idea is to build those. A lot of work has been done in this area and you can see that spaces are being cleared and there are huge machines everywhere and people everywhere trying to clear the rubble. But again the task is huge and you're doing it on slopes so it's extremely difficult to get machines in and to get the rubble out fast. The idea is to try to keep focusing on this area, because it's an area where a lot of people are going to be in these camps, to make an example of what can be done by putting up transitional shelters and getting the first people out of the camps and back into some kind of transitional shelter. So, a huge effort going on. This is the particular flagship project of the Haitian government and the Haitian president, President Preval, and that's good. I was impressed by what was happening but I was more impressed by what still has to happen to make anything really change there in the next few weeks and months.

The biggest problem we face is this question of shelter and where are people actually going to go. There is sort of a very carefully worked out strategy to try and make this happen. First of all,

the best thing to happen is for people to go back and live where they lived before because that's what they want to do. They want to be in their communities. There's been a long process of evaluating housing. I think there was something like 180,000 houses which were affected by the earthquake in Port-au-Prince and a surprisingly large number have been evaluated as still habitable. It's a very simple system: you go and literally put a sticker on the house which is green if you can go back and live in it, yellow if it can be repaired, and red if it has to be destroyed. The virtual majority of houses have been evaluated by engineers who are evaluating them and surprisingly 40 percent are actually habitable now and another probably 30 percent can be repaired and it's a relatively small number which actually have to be destroyed. But then you have to persuade people to actually go back and live in the houses. A lot of people are still traumatized and therefore very unwilling to go back and live in a concrete structure even though life in the camps is not good.

Also you run into some very difficult problems because a lot of people did not own these houses, they rented them. They do not have an income at the moment for obvious reasons and they cannot pay the rent. The landlord may be saying "Yes, you can come back and live here, but where's the six months' rent from the time you were living in camps?" Not a reasonable request, you may say, but that's what is happening in some cases. So they need to find incentives to get people to go back into their housing, to get incentives and a proper scheme underway to repair them, and some subsidies for people to pay the rents that they're not able afford at the moment, as well as actually demolishing the housing that needs to be demolished.

That's the first leg, the short leg, of the strategy. The next leg is to relocate people from the most dangerous camps—I'm not talking about personal security, I'm talking about the most liable to flood and the most vulnerable to hurricanes—to other areas. Now the big problem here is there's not a lot of space around, but in fact some land has been identified not far from Port-au-Prince where we are constructing some more of these transitional shelters that I was talking about. The idea is to build 135,000 of these transitional shelters, which is enough for about three-quarters of a million people if you multiply by the number of family members each family has. We've actually only built about 5,000 or 6,000 of these transitional shelters so far because it took a very long time to identify the land and it took a very long time to get the permissions for the shelter on the land. There is a massive underlying issue in Haiti which is land tenure. There is no proper cadastre—I think the technical term is—which says who owns what. Whatever there was was destroyed in the earthquake—the records. There is a huge problem with virtually any piece of land you care to mention about who owns it and who has the right to say what happens on it. People have been very critical of the government for being slow about this. To some extent that's right, but it's actually a very difficult problem. Also if you put a lot of transitional shelters somewhere in an open area, everybody's well-aware that that will not be a temporary arrangement, that will turn into a permanent slum, that's just the way it is. If you're not really careful, anyway. So local authorities and landowners are very nervous about giving land which they may never get back and will turn into a slum.

Now, there is a very good case for decongesting Port-au-Prince and putting people elsewhere because it was too crowded before and it's too concentrated in economic terms as well. But are there spaces you can find where you want to put those shelters, actually where you want to send people? What jobs are they going to do? What livelihoods are they going to have? There are no

easy answers to those questions, which is one of the reasons why relocating people and putting them into proper shelters is a very difficult and slow and complicated process which we're still working through. It looks like it's going to take quite a lot of time before we can get these transitional shelters built and before we can get a lot of people relocated. So the reality is that people will face life in these miserable camps—that's what they are—for a long time to come.

There's another complication here which is that bizarrely—although you might find this hard to imagine—the camps, for many people in Haiti, are better than what they had lived in before. In the sense that—not that they're comfortable places at all—but that there are shelters there and there are basic services being provided free. So there's healthcare, there's education, very often free—rudimentary but still there—and there's other services which are available and there is the hope that if you're in a camp you'll be relocated to something better and you'll get something out of it. So the camps are also exerting a pull factor for people, even people who were not affected by the earthquake, who were living in slum areas of Port-au-Prince, who are coming into the camps because it's actually a little bit better in the camps and there's the hope of something better rather than staying in the existing sort of slum area of Port-au-Prince. So again, it's a complicated issue of distinguishing between the people who were affected by the earthquake and are very badly in need and lots of the existing population who were very poor to start with in very poor conditions who are also badly in need. How do you distinguish between groups? So there have been a lot of major complications. So this question of shelter and relocation is one of the biggest issues we face at the moment.

Over to the other big question—which is not really my responsibility but a question being asked—when does reconstruction really start and when do things really start to happen? And that again has been slow I think, but there's now a reconstruction commission in place which can decide about the priorities and the plans and start to make things happen. There is a fund in place to receive funds from various international donors who pledged money in New York at the end of March but it's been very, very slow to get this moving. I think it's partly because there's a little bit of a vicious circle of the donors saying “Yes, we will provide the money, but who are we giving it to and what are you going to do with it and how do we know you're going to use it properly?” and the people on the ground saying, “Well look, we cannot do anything without money; you have to give us the money and then we can sort it out.” So there's a little bit of going around in circles. It will happen, but again it's just Haiti, it will be slower than anyone would actually want to see. So that means that it is going to be quite a long time before people are back in permanent housing and quite a long time before a lot of the public buildings and so on can be rebuilt and the infrastructure can be restored. And of course one of the things that people want to be sure about is that Haiti is built back better than it was before. It was not a great example of governance or economic prosperity or anything like that. Of course people want it to be better, which is a perfectly good and reasonable aspiration which we're all very keen on. And of course we need to make sure that this process is controlled by the Haitian government and Haitians, not by the international community.

One of the problems of Haiti before was that because of the concerns about governance and the concerns about corruption—whether or not we were justified it doesn't matter, the concerns were there—and so people wanted to give money to NGOs who work in Haiti because then you could avoid the problems of governance and corruption. This was reasonable in one sense, but what it

did was disempower the government even further. And therefore you never had a chance of breaking out of this vicious circle. You were creating a parallel structure and one of the things that we're determined to do for the future is avoid that parallel structure and to make sure that we empower the Haitian government and the Haitian people to take the lead themselves, to rebuild their country. Anyways, the reconstruction issue is now the big issue in a sense and how fast is that going to happen and how well is it going to happen.

And the biggest issue in a way—I've always said these things—is creating jobs, investment, real jobs. The humanitarian aspect produced some income for people through a system called "Cash for Work" where they simply take people who have been displaced and you put them on rubble removal and repairs or something and that's a perfectly good way of giving them income, giving them some sort of stake in what's happening, and something useful to do. But these are not sustainable jobs; they're for a few weeks or they're very low wages obviously, minimum wage, and so what you need is sustainable investment and sustainable jobs and that's the big challenge. That's one of the things that former President Clinton is trying to encourage in particular the private sector to invest in Haiti in the textile area or other areas where there's a real opportunity to create these kinds of jobs because that's the best way out of this—it's always much better than aid—aid is temporary and it uses all sorts of distortions and that's why the private investment is better.

Very quickly and then I'll stop—just a few lessons that we have tried to learn from this about things we didn't do as well as we should've done. We learned some things about our own coordination structures. We have structures to coordinate international assistance—they're not always visible to the outside world but they're there and they made a lot of difference in this case but we can get them better and we need to invest more in this coordination structure. And we need to make sure that we include some of the big actors—like the military players who were there in this particular case, the Americans and the Canadians, and some of the big financial donors—better in these structures so that we have a more coherent effort all-around. I think the other big lesson we want to take from this—and it's a lesson we've tried to learn before but weren't very successful in—is to take more account of local sensitivity, local concerns, local desires, and local capacity. It sounds obvious and it sounds easy, but actually it isn't because you come in with your organization and things are a mess and yet you get on with doing things as best as you can. But it's much better if you can use the organizations which are there—and they're always there and they're always going to be there long after you've gone—and make sure you're actually talking as much as possible to the people you're trying to help about what it is they want and how they can help. Again, it sounds obvious, but we don't do it very well—not systematically at least. And then of course there's taking into account local cultural sensitivities and other things which again you sometimes aren't very good at doing, so that's one of the big lessons we want to learn from this, not only for Haiti but for the future.

The challenges are enormous—six months seems a long time but the humanitarian effort in some of the basic areas I was talking about will need to go on well into next year—probably throughout next year—in parallel to the reconstruction effort; they're not the same thing, it's not a transition from one to the other, they both will need to run in parallel for a couple of years. That means we need continuing resources and that means we need to keep on appealing to governments and to some extent to individuals to keep on financing the humanitarian

organizations at the same time as the reconstruction effort is being financed. We were able to raise lots of money at the beginning because governments were very generous, individuals were very generous, but of course that doesn't last forever. Because the media searchlight goes somewhere else but the problems don't change, the problems are still there, and that's another big problem.

**Ms. Ellis:** Thank you very much. [Applause.] We're going to open it up for questions and I'm going to start it off.

Let's say you have to take over reconstruction, what would your priorities be? You talked about housing. There was just an Op-Ed that was either in *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post* and they were talking about rubble clearance as a solution to unemployment, not just for a few days but because it's so vast that if they got more trucks in there that it could really help the situation. I'm wondering what you think about that and then this whole issue of land and the fight over that. Supposedly there's increased evictions and homelessness and so that's another issue. And you mentioned the vicious cycle and I was just wondering how do you break through some of the logjams because clearly a lot of money has been pledged and hasn't been delivered, and as you said, people are waiting to see something happen or concrete plans or have the feeling that the government is more accountable or something but you can't wait forever. So I'm just wondering, how do you begin? How do you break through the logjams? And who has to be doing this? What are the roles for everybody because there are so many players and you mentioned coordination?

**Sir John:** Well, there are a lot of questions there. There are no miracle solutions here. It's not something obvious that nobody caught on to. There's not something you could do and then it would all be fine. It will take a long time; it will take a lot of effort, a lot of hard work by a lot of people working together to make things happen and to build Haiti back better. Including, by the way, resistance to disasters, because the disasters haven't gone away. There could easily be a hurricane strike this year; hurricane season is forecast to be a bad year this year, you never know. And of course the earthquakes—Haiti's very earthquake-prone and you have to be aware of that, you have to prepare for that and be better prepared than last time. And then lastly, you have to be sure that when you're building back, you're not building back in as vulnerable a way as you were building before.

I think rubble removal is crucial, not only because you can provide employment, but because you can't do anything until you get the rubble out of the way. And as I tried to explain, it's a massive task. The roads are very narrow. Yes, there probably needs to be another hundred trucks engaged on this very quickly and more machines for those people. There are things happening; when you drive around the streets, you see rubble lying around and you think, "Why haven't they cleared it away?", but what you don't realize is that it's not the same rubble that was there two days ago. When that's been taken away you will bring out more and there are lots of people breaking down rubble into smaller and smaller bits and actually recycling it. There's a lot more happening than sometimes is visible to the naked eye.

**Ms. Ellis:** Where are they taking it?

**Sir John:** They're taking it to a site outside Port-au-Prince. There are ideas about dumping it in the sea to increase the area around Port-au-Prince, which is not a bad idea if you get it right, but the problem is that rubble tends to be mixed up with all sorts of toxic things and you need to be able to sort out the rubble from the rubbish. There is a plan for removal, which is to remove 10 percent of it—which is two million cubic meters—in the next three months, from the main priority areas. That will cost \$120 million dollars. But if the government approves that plan, then we can get some donors that say, "We will finance this," and that will at least be a start. It will be a long time before it's all done.

I think to break the vicious circle, the only thing—I'm not an expert, I don't have the solutions—but I think the main agencies—the reconstruction agencies, the World Bank, UNDP, NGOs who ought to be involved in this—need to produce very specific projects, "We will do this and it's going to take this long and it'll cost this much and this is what it will do and this is how it fits into the priorities." And that needs to be approved by the reconstruction commission but it needs to be centrally organized and then the donors can say, "Alright, we will finance this project." And I think that's the next stage is doing that way around so that we're very clear and people can be fairly confident in whose going to do it and what it's going to achieve and how it fits into the national priorities and then it can start. That's the next stage.

As to the priorities in general, the obvious one is jobs. They are hugely important because that provides the structure and an income and so on for these people to rebuild their lives. Schools—people want their children to go to school, women want their children to go to school particularly. It was a disaster area before but it can be better. Can it be all free or do we have to go back to some kind of private system? I don't know, that's a big issue in itself. The health system needs to be rebuilt; it's functioning now with a huge amount of help from a lot of international organizations, but it needs to be made self-sufficient. So that's a major priority. And then on the land side, again there's no very easy solution to this, because there's a lot of different interests. There are private landowners, they're not necessarily vicious people, but they're saying, "This site, which is occupied by people and has been for six months, is my living and I need it back, so I'll give you reasonable notice but I'm going to get you off my property in a month's time." But people have nowhere to go. So this is not an easy problem to solve and the government is left to say, "These evictions are banned." But they don't have the capacity to enforce that so they're reluctant to say something that doesn't mean anything. Again, everything's complicated, I'm afraid. So we do need to make sure that people are not simply cast off in that way or thrown out of sites. But these are not necessarily grasping capitalists or lenders, these are also schools and clinics saying, "We cannot operate because our land is occupied by people and until they move, we can't do anything." So that's why we need to find these sites elsewhere to relocate people to. If you relocated people to another site, you have to provide the services, you have to provide the jobs, you have to provide the transport, otherwise you're simply creating another problem somewhere else. That's why it's a puzzle.

**Question:** I'm Melinda Bush. HRW Holdings is involved in land development projects, several in the Caribbean as well as elsewhere. I'd like you to elaborate a little bit on some of the initiatives in the private sector. Did you think that the private sector—anyone involved in investment, privatization, and tourism—hasn't been involved enough, given what you've said?

**Sir John:** I'm not really the expert to talk to about this, but we've been trying to engage a lot of private sector companies in this. There's a thing called the Office of the Special Envoys to Haiti, and they were doing this before the earthquake of course, trying to encourage private sector investment. I think tourism is one of the big issue areas they would like to see investment in. But if you look at the other side of the island, which is the Dominican Republic, the Dominican Republic has very successfully developed tourism. The Dominican Republic has been much, much smaller than Haiti throughout most of its existence, but through decent government and various other initiatives and preserving its forests, which Haiti wasn't doing, they have been able to develop tourism. There's no reason why that can't happen in Haiti. They have just as nice beaches and climate and everything else, so there's no reason why it can't happen. I think there was a gloomy picture, but that's just about Port-au-Prince and one or two towns surrounding it. There's whole areas of Haiti, particularly in the north, which were not affected by the earthquake—Cap-Haïtien and other places—where there'd be plenty of scope for tourism, even in the immediate future, if there's investment there to build a hotel, to build infrastructure, to build some more local airports so people can get in there quickly. And I think it's those kinds of ideas, plus textiles, plus maybe some of the local artisanal things—Haitians are incredibly skillful at producing art out of dustbin lids; it sounds stupid but it's absolutely fantastic. But there are things which can be done and there's no reason why Haitians can't do them, there's nothing about Haitians which is a problem, they're very successful when they're not in Haiti. It's the question of investment and governance which give them the opportunities. So I think once you get over the immediate problem of the earthquake, and hopefully a better situation all around, then I think there are real opportunities there and I would encourage people to take them, even though I don't want to conceal the fact that there are problems too. I already mentioned land as one of those issues. But those are the kind of areas that we're trying to encourage people to go into and textiles certainly have got big potential there.

**Question:** I'm Fiona Kelly with International Action. On July 1<sup>st</sup>, UN Washington coordinated an interview. Dalebrun Esther was speaking on one of the biggest diarrhea outbreaks in Haiti due to contaminated water. And I wanted you to speak about what role water will play in moving people back into their communities and whether or not they'll have access to safe water.

**Sir John:** Water is an issue, because as I said I can't remember the exact figure, but probably 55 percent or 60 percent of the population of Haiti did not have access to clean drinking water before the earthquake. I remember the first time I went there or maybe the second time I went there to a town called Léogâne, which is outside Port-au-Prince and was actually the town that was worst affected by the earthquake. I was talking to local authorities there—there is sort of a local rehabilitation authority there—about the problems and we were talking about the fact that the water system is broken and I said, "Oh, it was very badly affected by the earthquake" and they said, "No, it was broken before, it didn't work before." And we were talking about hospitals and I said, "Oh that hospital, that was damaged by the earthquake," and they said, "No, it was abandoned before the earthquake." These are the kind of issues that were there before, so it's not as if you can suddenly fix the system which was functioning before and there'll be water flying out of people's taps, it's much more complicated and difficult than that. Very large parts of the main of Port-au-Prince—Cité Soleil, which is the big slum area, didn't have running water for the most part. So there's a real issue about restoring it in a sustainable way and at the moment we're using water tankers and, as I said, it's a very expensive way of delivering water because

it's very labor-intensive and the fuel and the trucks and the tankers and so on you've got to be using every day. That's not sustainable either. So there's no easy solution to this. You need to have more water points where people can go. We're not going to put a tap in everybody's house, but at least if there are water points where people can go and collect water, that's what we need to do next. But that requires investment, it requires rubble removal, it requires trenches to be built to put the pipes in and so on—it's quite a long-term issue to get the good clean water supply there. But it is crucial. As I said before, we have managed to avoid epidemics so far. There's been some suggestions in one camp that there might have been a small outbreak of typhoid, for the moment it's not spread, but those fears are very much there.

And of course another big issue that I didn't mention is sanitation. I mean it's huge and hugely difficult. You've got 12,000 toilets or something and we need to build another 5,000 but that's a very, very minimal coverage. Most people didn't have access to toilets before the earthquake. It's a very unpleasant subject actually. But my point is that when it floods, then of course all the sanitation problems affect the water supply as well. So there are huge risks and this is going to be a problem for a long time to come on the water front.

**Question:** Thank you, Sir John, for your wonderful presentation. What has the UN and other international agencies done to have more direct contact with local organizations on the ground and to talk amongst people on the ground? Actually, they say that there's real aggravation to UN agencies and the local organizations that have been there on the ground. I want to get a little more information about moving forward.

**Sir John:** We didn't do this well. There were two big issues which made it worse in this particular case. One was that the main area where the UN agencies and the NGOs congregated was the UN logistics base. The main headquarters was destroyed by the earthquake, but the logistics base near the airport was not affected. That became the place where people went because it was the only place that had services, computers, and everything else. We piled into there in extremely difficult and unpleasant working conditions which are still there for many people actually. But that meant—because there was a certain amount of security around that base—that the local organizations and local people, they hadn't access to it or access was extremely difficult—to get a pass—just too difficult really. So that created a barrier to start with which is still there to some extent although we are trying to hold meetings outside that UN base now, because there are places becoming available elsewhere. The second thing is that—and this is not a new problem either but this was again bad in Haiti—unfortunately, the vast majority of aid workers are English-speaking. They don't speak English in Haiti, they speak either French or Creole. So that a lot of meetings were going on and even if people could get access to them, they didn't know what was going on. We tried to find ways around that, to have people who could help translate and we looked into having simultaneous translation equipment for people there, which you can get reasonably cheaply, but again, it created a real barrier which is still there, we haven't solved that problem either. It's quite difficult to find enough. All the main aid organizations, including the one I run, which is the Coordination Organization, find it a struggle to find enough French speakers to go there. You have to take them from places where they already have problems, like Congo and Chad and so on. So everybody is searching madly to get people to go to Haiti and find French speakers, but there weren't enough, so we're a very English-speaking environment in a non-English-speaking country and that's a real problem. So

we are trying to take steps to improve that and make sure that these clusters are more accessible to local NGOs and local organizations and hold more meetings outside the UN base, to use more French, but we have a long way to go before it works probably. It's not because people are ill-intentioned or don't want to have contact with local populations, it's that it's sometimes not as easy as it should be or not enough effort is made to really overcome those barriers.

**Question:** Gillian Sorensen with the UN Foundation. Thank you Sir John, it was very, very interesting. Like everyone, I was very moved by the generous outpouring of support and donations right after the earthquake. And I hoped and assumed that would make a tremendous difference. But I was stunned last week when I received something from the Chronicle of Philanthropy documenting what these various big NGOs had received and how much had, in fact, been spent. These are NGOs that we know very well. But I was astonished; I'll cite just a couple: Catholic Relief Services received \$140 million and spent \$30 million, Salvation Army has received \$20 million and spent \$6 million, World Vision has received \$192 million in donations and spent \$60 million. My question is what more can be done to move this forward, to light a fire under this and get the money where it's needed. Ultimately how are they accountable that the incredible millions that they have raised do in fact go to Haitian relief in the long run or does it just go off in other directions or into somebody's pocket?

**Sir John:** I think the first thing to say is that you don't need to worry in the case of these big organizations, the money will go to Haiti, it will not go into somebody's pockets because these are very respectable, excellent organizations, all the ones you mentioned. It will go to Haiti, it will not go to some other disaster because they all have very strict internal rules about where it goes. But the reality is that if they are a responsible organization in some ways you can't spend money too fast; if you want to spend it properly and wisely you have to know what you're spending it on. So, in a way, it's right not to rush in just throwing money in all directions because it isn't necessarily going to help. But there are several things here. One is that, for example, World Vision and a lot of the other major US-based NGOs, did collect a lot of money through their appeals, but it's not all for relief, some of it is for reconstruction, probably about 50/50. Most of them are going to use it for relief and reconstruction. So reconstruction is obviously long-term. So they're deliberately holding onto some of it for reconstruction, which they may now start to be able to spend, for reasons that I explained before. So that's part of it. The rest of it they will have to try and spend as reasonably and quickly as they can given the relief, but again, you can't throw it everywhere. We have been saying to some of them—you have the American Red Cross as well, which has raised large amounts of money—that we, that is other UN agencies or other agencies on the ground, may be able to use some of this money if you can't use it fast enough. And there has been a little bit of that so far, but that's a tricky subject because it was given to that organization and not another organization—there's a bit of competition there which you need to be aware of. But I think it will be used and, as I said, it will certainly not be disappearing into some corrupt kind of thing. This is a problem we do not have very often. There was a bit of a similar problem with the tsunami. In the end, more money was raised than could ever be spent, and some organizations really struggled with this because they couldn't spend it on the tsunami, there was nothing left to spend it on. So what were they supposed to do with it, because they were not allowed to give it to something else? Some eventually just did that and announced publicly that's what they're doing, they're going to give it to a good cause somewhere else. I don't think this will happen in Haiti. The tsunami was an even bigger world

media event than the Haiti earthquake. But there were some organizations like Médecins Sans Frontières—Doctors Without Borders—said three days after the disaster, “We don’t need anymore money, don’t send us anymore money; we’ve already got all we need for this disaster.” Not all of them said that.

**Question:** I’m Mary Jane Potter. I just wondered about credentialing the organizations that go down. Is there any way of insisting on some kind of shared principles for the organizations in all these areas working that want to go down?

**Sir John:** The question of credentials is a real issue. It’s not a problem you have in many places, but it is a problem you had after the tsunami and it’s a problem we have after the Haiti earthquake, that you get a huge number of NGOs who are coming in to try to help with the best of intentions. Some are exceedingly good. The big ones are very capable, very experienced, very respectful of the standards and know them very well, and everybody works together very well. There are some small ones which are also extremely good, very specialized ones like for handicapped people, which are extremely good even if they’re small. But a lot of others, who are not so experienced, not so capable, not so able to fit into the coordinated system, and actually, in the worst kind of cases, can get in the way rather than do anything useful. Which is a harsh thing to say, but that’s a bit of a reality sometimes. So in the case of Haiti, people talked about 10,000 NGOs being there, that’s not true actually. I think it’s more like 1,000. But 1,000 is a lot. We have a system called clusters, which is actually sectors, so there’s a health cluster, and there’s a water and sanitation cluster, and there are shelter clusters. The health cluster, I think three or four weeks after the disaster, had 423 different organizations trying to attend a meeting. You can imagine how difficult that is to manage. Some of them are huge players and some of them are tiny players from a church somewhere in the Midwest that just sent a doctor. So that’s very difficult to manage.

Now, the question is, how can we regulate that, which is not a new issue. We have always taken the view that we’re the UN, and certainly occupying my position, Emergency Relief Coordinator, cannot simply start to pick and choose between NGOs. We’d put ourselves in an impossible position vis-à-vis the NGOs. Some governments are very tough and they say, “We’re only going to let in NGOs who we can see are large and capable and experienced and understand the international systems,” and they can control it. So there are some strong governments. Sometimes they take that too far, by the way. But many governments, and the Haitian government is an example, are not strong enough or well-organized enough or capable enough or they don’t want to offend NGOs because offending NGOs is a very risky thing to do. They’re very vocal and very able to mobilize opinion, so they don’t want to keep anybody out so everybody’s allowed in. And then you get the chaos.

It seems to me that the only way out of this—and this is what we’ve been discussing with some of the big NGOs and NGO consortia—is some kind of self-specification. When I say self-specification, I mean by the NGO community, who are certifying NGOs that they are capable and experienced and have the right understanding and the right standards and the right knowledge of those standards and people have worked in emergencies before internationally and have the capacity and something to offer. Only they will be allowed to go. Allowed by whom is another question; they would be the only ones encouraged to go from the NGO community. I

think something like that is probably the only way forward. It would not solve the problem entirely. I've had a long talk about this and there are standards but still it's very difficult to stop organizations. People want to do it because they want to help; it's something very visible on television and they want to help. It's not helped, to be honest, by Anderson Cooper who sits there and says, "Anybody who wants to help, pack your suitcase and go." Frankly, that's not helpful. That's exactly what you don't want them to do. I understand why he's saying it, he wants to help, in the same way that a lot of governments send a lot of aid which is not useful. We're constantly having to say to governments around the world, "Please do not fill up a plane full of stuff which you don't know whether it's wanted or not and send it to Haiti without even knowing where it's going, without having an organized way to take it and distribute it and know it's useful." So the World Health Organization is spending tens of thousands of dollars at the moment destroying medical equipment and drugs because it's out of date, it's got instructions which no one can understand, it's something that's not wanted at all. It's a real waste of time and money. But governments want to respond because they see it on television, they want to show that their plane—you've all seen the picture of a plane loaded up at the local airport with supplies and bottled water and so on. If you think an experienced country that knows what's required, that's fine, but there are many countries in these kinds of crises that send stuff which is not wanted and there are lots of horror stories from the tsunami about container-loads of teddy bears and Christmas trees and heaven knows what else. You just have to destroy them. Anyway, that's a slightly different subject. How do you control it is a real problem—without deterring organizations that want to help and without creating a problem. We haven't found the solution yet. But in most disasters, it doesn't happen; it's really for the big media massive disasters.

**Question:** But the organizing, controlling unit now should be the Haitian government, right?

**Sir John:** Yes, but it's not reasonable to ask them to do that, frankly. Some countries will certainly do that; some will take it a bit too far and keep too many NGOs out, we don't want interfering NGOs either. It's a tricky problem.

**Question:** My question is about education. You mentioned some emergency education facilities that are being set up. We're interested to hear also if the UN is planning anything in higher education because we, in our area, have heard from many students and scholars because most of the universities in Haiti have been destroyed.

**Sir John:** There's a big effort which goes into emergency education, but it is mostly primary education that we're trying to keep, particularly younger children, to give them some kind of normalcy, some kind of learning space and safe space to play at the very least, some kind of respite for the mothers because mothers need to go do other things and they can't do it if the children are there all the time. So there are all sorts of reasons. You're always trying to organize learning spaces or play areas or primary schools for children. It gets much more difficult to organize for secondary education because you need not just volunteers, but teachers and curricula and so on, and even more so for higher education. We don't really get involved in higher education, but there is an issue, as you say, which is that the universities—certainly the ones in Port-au-Prince—were destroyed. So that is part of the reconstruction process to build them back, but it's not something you can do as a sort of emergency relief thing, it's much more longer-term. UNICEF and other organizations are very good at providing for the basic education,

schools in a box, materials, and tent schools. Usually you can find people in the community and in the camps themselves. You'll find teachers who want to help, which is much better than bringing in experts from outside. But higher education is a much more long-term initiative.

**Question:** And a follow-up question: if you had to say how many years it would take before reconstruction, before there would be new and better universities built. And I ask that for a very good reason, because there are students and professors also with no place to go and some of us are trying to help that effort.

**Sir John:** Well I would say, at least five years. If you look at the cities which were destroyed by the tsunami, where you had a strong, capable, functioning government with resources, to build back even rudimentary housing took three or four years, never mind things like universities. So those things are long-term. It'll be ten years before—in Port-au-Prince anyway—you've really done enough to restore things and hopefully build them back better.

**Ms. Ellis:** I'd like to know what's being done or can be done to beef up the security in these camps since people are going to be there, it sounds like, for quite a while and it's something that you mentioned that's particularly affecting women.

**Sir John:** Security in the camps. Several things we try to do. One is some very basic things: design the camps properly. Now these camps were not designed, they just happened. But even then, you try to redesign them so that, for example, the toilets are not somewhere where women feel vulnerable, you separate the men's and women's toilets if you can, that's the ideal, and you have a layout where there's a space, where there's visibility of what's happening—again, very difficult in the circumstances in Haiti where it just happened and things are very congested together. Providing lighting, light, is hugely important and there's a lot happening there. President Clinton has been very engaged in doing that too. So those are very basic things you can do. The camp committees—there's usually a local camp committee, which helps to run the camps. Messaging is important. But also, immediate police presence at the camps. The Haitian National Police, as I said before, were very badly affected by the earthquake themselves. They have actually done a very good job at reconstituting themselves and at some of the bigger camps now they are always present, there are actually physically posted inside the camp and that is helping. So that's what needs to happen. But there are so many camps that it's not going to happen in all of them. And some are more dangerous than others. It depends on where they were. If they were very close to the areas where the gangs were very prevalent, then the gangs also reconstitute themselves inside the camps and in other areas, I imagine, not to quite the same extent, but it's a bit hard to be sure. There's definitely a risk, not just a risk, there are examples of sexual violence and all sorts of other things there. Whether it's much worse than it was before is hard to know because the reporting before was probably not very good and the reporting now is probably even worse. But one of the things some of the women said to me at the camp I visited on Sunday was that they're very worried about their daughters, not just about being raped, but about just being out and about where disciplines and family control have all broken down.

**Ms. Ellis:** I was just going to ask you about that. Do you think that it's because they're in the camps and everything or do you think that there is maybe a sense that they want to make up for a loss of families—I mean, it's hard to know.

**Sir John:** That was mentioned to me while I was there, but I'm not sure that's sort of a motivating factor for it, but it may be there. Someone told me something actually fascinating but I don't know if it's true that if you look at the births after a disaster like this, something like 70 percent of them are girls. I can't explain that, but it must be some biological factor.

**Ms. Ellis:** Well, I just want to thank you so much for taking time out of your very busy schedule to share all this with us and thank you for your great questions. We want to wish you all the best with your remaining time in your position and in your new endeavor. Thank you so much again.  
[*Applause.*]