

## **PAHO/WHO Coordinating Regional Efforts to Assist Haiti after Earthquake**

*Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean offer an outpouring of support*

**Washington, D.C., Jan. 14, 2010 (PAHO)** - The Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) is coordinating through its country offices the mobilization of efforts to help health authorities in Haiti meet the basic health needs of their people in the aftermath of Tuesday's earthquake.

Dr. Mirta Roses, PAHO Director, convened a regional virtual meeting this morning with PAHO/WHO Representatives in Latin America and the Caribbean to exchange information on what actions have been taken by PAHO/WHO Member States in the region in response to the earthquake. Dr. Roses in turn provided updated information on the situation in Haiti and emphasized the importance of a coordinated response to ensure more efficient and effective delivery of disaster assistance.

PAHO is coordinating and facilitating the mobilization of health experts and rescue personnel from a number of its Member States and other regions to assess the impact of the earthquake on the health situation and to provide relief and recovery for the quake's survivors in Haiti. PAHO/WHO is working with other United Nations agencies, international partners, and local authorities in these efforts.

Many countries are in the process of sending rescue missions, medical care, medical supplies, water, food and other general provisions to Haiti. Some of these relief efforts include:

- Cuba has 403 personnel in Haiti, 334 of whom were already working in health in the country prior to the earthquake. Additional experts have been sent in to provide further assistance. The ministries of health of Cuba and Haiti are coordinating the evacuation of survivors with urgent medical needs for treatment in Cuba.
- Jamaica has agreed to receive earthquake victims in their hospitals, which have been placed on alert.
- Brazil had contributed US\$10 million.
- Venezuela has offered to help reestablish the provision of free fuel to medical installations in Haiti.
- Hercules aircraft carrying provisions including medical, rescue and military personnel, medical supplies, water, food, and shelter (tents) have been sent to Haiti by countries including Argentina, Chile, Ecuador and Peru.
- Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Venezuela, and the CARICOM countries, among others, are also providing important contributions and are awaiting information on additional specific needs.

PAHO Director Roses noted the importance of rescue teams coming from countries such as Mexico, France and possibly Israel, all of which have strong experience in rescue work.

In a press briefing today, PAHO's Deputy Director, Jon Andrus, also noted that "the response from the U.S. and Canada has also been extraordinary, and the list goes on and on." He added that "coordination is the key role that PAHO/WHO can play."

"Our PAHO Emergency Operations Center [in Washington, D.C.] is operating as a clearinghouse for information," said Andrus. "We are conducting daily global conference calls with WHO headquarters in Geneva and with partners in the Global Health Cluster to best coordinate the response to the emergency."

In her virtual conference, PAHO Director Dr. Rosa Torres emphasized the following priorities:

- In this first week, the most important health priorities are search-and-rescue efforts to find survivors trapped beneath rubble and treatment for people with major injuries.
- Countries offering support should coordinate an effective delivery of that support with their embassy in Haiti or with the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).
- Any medical personnel, field hospitals, rescue teams set up by donor countries and organizations sent to Haiti must be self-sufficient and should not require support from the local community.
- Disaster assistance from donor countries and organizations is best provided on the basis of on-the-ground needs assessments, and in coordination with national authorities.
- After the first two weeks, donor countries and organizations should be prepared to provide assistance in the medium and long term, including the provision of safe water, food, medical supplies and personnel, as well as coordinated actions and projects to reconstruct health facilities and the health system in general, and address other longer-term needs.
- Hospitals can and should be built to withstand the impact of disasters and should be planned and equipped to remain functioning after disasters.

PAHO's Director will continue to hold daily virtual conferences with PAHO/WHO Representatives in the Region, as part of the PAHO coordination efforts and response to the situation on Haiti.

## Links

- [PAHO/WHO Mobilizing to Meet Haiti's Health Needs after Earthquake](#)
- [Healthcare coordination crucial in earthquake-hit Haiti](#) (WHO Press Release)
- [Press Conference Video](#) (courtesy of the Organization of American States)
- [PAHO Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Relief](#)
- [Twitter PAHO Emergency Operations Center](#)
- [Situation Report #1 -- Haiti earthquake](#)
- [PAHO/PIN youtube](#)
- [PAHO/WHO Facebook](#)
- [Twitter PAHO/WHO](#)