

Haiti Plan: Reconstruction or Recolonisation?

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Bill Clinton may be Haiti's "co-reconstruction czar".

A message from Camille Chalmers of PAPDA summarises a report in the Miami Herald of March 23 giving details of the 'Reconstruction Plan' for Haiti likely to be approved at the donor conference to be held in Miami on March 31.

Central to the plan is the creation of a Commission dominated by Western governments and financial institutions and supported by a full-time 'reconstruction czar' who is likely to be Bill Clinton.

According to the criteria reported by the Miami Herald, "the voting members (of the Commission) will include donors that have given either **\$100 million** toward Haiti's reconstruction over the next two years or **\$200 million** in debt relief". These criteria would exclude CARICOM, but our information is that the Government of Haiti has proposed that CARICOM will be a voting member of the Commission. In any case the criteria will almost certainly privilege the United States, Canada, France, the EU, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Inter-American Development Bank.

The Commission would be set up an all-powerful Haitian Development Authority that would plan, implement and oversee Haiti's development over the next ten years.

Given the reported exclusion of Haitian grassroots organisations from the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment process and from the preparation for the donor conference, and given the domination of the Commission by the same governments, institutions and even individuals associated with failed neoliberal policies of the past, the outcome of this process seems predictable.

We will doubtless hear from Haitian organisations in due course.

In the meantime the question arises: is this a Plan for the reconstruction of Haiti, or its recolonisation?

Haiti reconstruction plan highlights

The Miami Herald 3/23/2010

Here are the highlights of the Haiti reconstruction plan expected to be presented at a March 31 international donor's conference in New York:

- **The creation of an Interim Haiti Recovery Commission (IHRC) by a vote of parliament** to oversee how and where billions of dollars of aid flowing into Haiti are spent over the **next 18 months**.
- **The commission would exist for 18 months** and its decisions would be guided by a **20-member board of Haitians and foreigners** whose voting members include donors that have given either **\$100 million** toward Haiti's reconstruction over the next two years or **\$200 million** in debt relief. The board will review and approve projects regardless of the funder.
- The commission would be **co-chaired by Haiti's prime minister** and an international figure involved in the recovery process. **The president of Haiti would retain veto power**. The chairs would be supported by an executive director, who manages the day-to-day operations. Haiti is expected to offer **Bill Clinton**, the former U.S. president and now U.N. special envoy to Haiti, the job as **co-reconstruction czar**.
- A key role of the IRHC's mandate would be to support the establishment of a Haitian Development Authority (HDA) that would plan, sequence and coordinate projects **over 10 or more years** in redeveloping Haiti. Haitians involved in the HDA would have worked alongside foreigners on the commission -- and eventually take over their task once the commission morphs into the HDA.
- All projects -- from a school to hospital, regardless of the funder -- would have to go to the IHRC/HDA for approval to ensure that they fit well with Haiti's master plan and vision. Foreign donors or nongovernmental organizations would no longer be able to build what they want without Haitian approval.
- Once fully operational, the HDA could be chaired by a well-respected and senior Haitian government official, who would oversee the daily operations of the HDA and would report to Haiti's prime minister.
- The task of the IRHC, and ultimately the HDA, would be the initial implementation of a Haiti Development Plan, which would be presented and endorsed at the 2010 Haiti donor conference. Haiti's government has said it needs **\$34.4 billion** to redevelop the country **over 10 years**. This includes the **\$11.5 billion** in post-disaster needs assessment.
- Multidonor Trust Fund: This will be one more mechanism for donors to channel funding for Haiti's reconstruction, allowing resources to be pooled for large projects. These projects would also have to be approved by the IRHC/HDA. **The fund will be managed by the World Bank with the Inter-American Development** implementing the construction.
- To address transparency and construction concerns, the IRHC/HDA would be complemented by an **independent audit authority** and a communications office.

Source: U.S. State Department concept notes on creation of the Haiti Development Authority and interviews with individuals familiar with the proposal.

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