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U.S. Participating in International Donors' Conference for Haiti State Department, USAID officials leading delegation at event

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Washington -- The United States is participating in a July 24-25 international donors' conference for Haiti designed to help the new Haitian government of President René Préal with social and economic development in the Caribbean nation.

Thomas Shannon from the U.S. State Department and Adolfo Franco from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) are leading a U.S. delegation at the conference, taking place in Haiti's capital of Port-au-Prince. Pledges from the international community are scheduled for the July 25 session. Almost 30 countries and international organizations are participating in the conference, which includes the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and CARICOM, a 15-nation bloc of Caribbean nations.

The State Department says the Port-au-Prince event will build on the strong show of support for Haiti's new government made by the international community at a May 23 ministerial meeting in Brasilia.

In Brasilia, the department said the global community reiterated its commitment to Haiti's long-term development and agreed to support the Preval government's goals of building sound democratic institutions, promoting national dialogue, increasing private sector investment, promoting solid economic policies and extending basic services to every corner of Haiti.

Shannon, the State Department assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere Affairs, and Franco, USAID's assistant administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean, also led the U.S. delegation at that Brasilia meeting.

The meeting also reunited what is called the "Core Group on Haiti" -- the United States, Canada, Latin America and the European Union -- and reconfirmed the commitment of nations that have sent peacekeeping troops to Haiti under the banner of a U.N. stabilization force known by the acronym MINUSTAH.

Franco said at the Brasilia meeting that Haiti faces many challenges and the international community must remain engaged over the long term to help the beleaguered nation recover from many years of political, economic and social instability.

On the crucial matter of security in Haiti, Franco said the global community must support "vetting, training, and equipping" an increased Haitian police force, "paying particular attention" to its role in protecting human rights. The U.S. government, he said, is providing \$15 million a year to support Haiti's police force.

At a July 2004 donors' conference for Haiti held in Washington, the international community pledged \$1.3 billion in Haitian assistance. The goal of the Port-au-Prince event is raising a similar amount following Préval's February 7 election as Haiti's president and his subsequent May 14 inauguration.

The State Department released a fact sheet May 25 that said the United States is committed to developing a democratic Haiti and to improving the lives of Haitians.

In fiscal years 2004 and 2005, the United States spent more than \$340 million to improve governance, security, the rule of law and economic recovery, as well as to meet critical humanitarian needs in Haiti, according to the fact sheet.

With the addition of nearly \$200 million allocated in fiscal year 2006, U.S. total assistance to Haiti is expected to be more than \$530 million by the September 30 end of fiscal year 2006. The president's budget request for fiscal year 2007 includes \$194 million for Haiti, the fact sheet said.

The fact sheet is available on the State Department Web site.

For more information on U.S. policy, see Haiti.

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