

**Joint Statement of the Representatives for Children of the Member States  
on the situation of children in Haiti after the recent natural disaster**

The community of States in the region of the Americas, as represented by their governing bodies on the matter of childhood, with the support of the Inter-American Children's Institute, an OAS Specialized Organization, expresses its concern with regard to the tragic events which have cast a shadow over its sister nation of Haiti, arising from the series of earthquakes which originated on 12 January of this year.

We share the pain of families and the community at the loss of thousands of human lives and damage to property as a consequence of the devastation of the country's capital city and surrounding areas. The sequels of these events give rise to deep consternation and a pressing need to engage in significant efforts in support of humanitarian aid, in order to channel and facilitate the protection of lives at risk and emerging care for those who now lack food and shelter.

To date, many countries in the world, as well as regional and international agencies, and civil society organizations, have put aid plans into action with contributions of different kinds which constitute a valuable support for the community affected.

In this context, we consider it appropriate to underline our strong interest in the care of the children in Haiti at this time of serious risk. Consistent with the goals and provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, priority should be given to the children who are victims of the catastrophe. It is now more than ever an urgent and indispensable task to address the needs of the children of Haiti, particularly in view of the fact that they constitute half of the population of the country.

All of the above makes it necessary for the principal efforts with regard to humanitarian aid to be devoted to alleviating the damages and risks which now threaten the lives and rights of thousands of children, and especially of those who have been left wholly unprotected because of the loss of all family bonds.

Our purpose in submitting this joint expression of interest is to put the best interest of the children of Haiti above all else and to activate as soon, and as appropriately as possible, a joint strategy for the care of children deprived of parental and/or alternative care, in view of the extreme state of vulnerability which they are confronting.

In this respect, we wish to give particular consideration to encouraging the development of processes in harmony with international norms and domestic law and regulation, aimed at family reunification, including international adoption when appropriate, and at the same time, enabling other in-country measures, such as family-based shelter, and temporary residence in shelters.

It is of the greatest importance to promote and protect the rights of children and thus deal with and prevent violations of children's dignity and rights brought about by trafficking and exploitation, amongst other activities.

Because of this, we include in this statement our commitment as States and region, with the purpose of benefiting the children of Haiti in activating areas and means of cooperation which will strengthen the participation of the Haitian State, fully respecting its sovereignty and independence with actions taken in the short, middle and long term. These actions are:

- To generate and strengthen areas of protection for children in extremely vulnerable situations.
- To support inter-state and inter-group coordination with the various national and foreign agencies and organizations.
- To provide human, technical and financial resources in order to support actions in the field that the State of Haiti deems necessary.

In a decisive attitude of fraternal and humanitarian interest amongst the States of the region, aimed at protecting and promoting the well-being of children, we reiterate our solidarity with the State of Haiti and join in extending our wishes for hope and our best efforts for the reconstruction of our sister nation.

**Argentina** - Marcela Paola Vessvessian, Representative of Argentina to the IIN Directing Council

**Brazil** - Carmen Silveira de Oliveira, Representative of Brazil to the IIN Directing Council

**Canada** - Kelly Stone, Representative of Canada to the IIN Directing Council

**Colombia** - Elvira Forero, Representative of Colombia to the IIN Directing Council

**Costa Rica** - Mario Víquez, Representative of Costa Rica to the IIN Directing Council and President of the IIN Directing Council

**Chile** - Eugenio San Martín, Representative of Chile to the IIN Directing Council

**Ecuador** - Sara Oviedo Fierro, Representative of Ecuador to the IIN Directing Council

**Mexico** - María Cecilia Landerreche Gómez Morin, Representative of Mexico to the IIN Directing Council

**Panama** - Gloria Lozano de Díaz, Secretary for Childhood and Adolescence (Secretaría de la Niñez y Adolescencia, Ministerio de Desarrollo Social)

**Paraguay** - Liz Cristina Torres, Representative of Paraguay to the IIN Directing Council

**Peru** – Nidia Vilchez Yucra, Representative of Peru to the IIN Directing Council

**Trinidad and Tobago** - Shareeda Narsiah, Ag. Senior Planning Officer, Policy and Programme Planning and Development Division, Ministry of Social Development

**United States of America** - Carmen R. Nazario, Assistant Secretary, Administration for Children and Families, U.S Dept of Health and Human Services

**Uruguay** - Nora Castro, Representative of Uruguay to the IIN Directing Council

**Venezuela** - Litbell Díaz Aché, Representative of Venezuela to the IIN Directing Council