

## News Release

### Haiti Earthquake: A catalyst for Regional Disaster Management Support from Australia.

The Government of Australia signed an agreement last Friday with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) to facilitate the handing over of an initial AUS\$1 million for humanitarian assistance to earthquake ravaged Haiti. This was done during a visit to the Coordinating Unit by Australian High Commissioner, Mr. Philip Kentwell where he was brought up to date on the Caribbean Community's (CARICOM) Response effort to Haiti. His discussions with CDEMA also centered on longer term support for Comprehensive Disaster Management (CDM) in the region.

These initial funds will be channeled into CARICOM's medical support and services activities in Haiti as well as support for the ongoing response effort by the Community. In addition, it will support capacity building for Haiti with regard to Disaster Risk Reduction. Additional funding to be expended by the end of June 2010 is intended to be a bridge between Australian short term funding and a long term Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Cooperative programme with CDEMA.

The Australian High Commissioner discussed a range of potential areas of collaboration for capacity building in the region with the Executive Director of CDEMA, Jeremy Collymore.

Australia has already contributed AUS\$5 million dollars for immediate emergency assistance to Haiti and further AUS\$5 million for longer term reconstruction.

Collymore, in expressing his appreciation said, "This additional funding demonstrates the commitment by the Australian Government to deepen their support for disaster reduction in the region." He also saw this as an excellent opportunity for South-South cooperation especially in support for Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Mr. Collymore also remarked that "the recent diversity of cooperative partnerships speaks to the buy-in by international donors of the regional comprehensive disaster management (CDM) strategy and programme."

"CDM is the platform on which we are working to reduce disaster loss in the region and to build resilient communities." Mr. Collymore added.

CDEMA is coordinating CARICOM's emergency response to Haiti, which has included deployment of military, medical and technical personnel for search and rescue operations, distribution of relief supplies, provision of medical services and performing security operations.

At a press conference on 19 January 2010, the Hon. Stephen Smith, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Australia, said the substantial contribution to Haiti reflected the scale and extent of the disaster and Australia's greater engagement with the Caribbean and CARICOM.