



Office of the Special Coordinator
for Lebanon

Bureau du Coordinateur Spécial
pour le Liban

**United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon Michael Williams
Statement at the Memorial Service in Honour of the Victims of Haiti Earthquake**

Beirut, Thursday, 21 January 2010

Not in war, but in a tragic natural disaster the UN has suffered its single largest calamity. Hedi Annabi, the Special Representative of the Secretary General and head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), his deputy Luiz Carlos da Costa and many other international and national United Nations staff working with them lost their lives last week in the earthquake that struck Haiti. Many others remain unaccounted for, and we must prepare for a list of victims and casualties that is set to grow even longer.

And our own suffering – the loss of family, friends, dear colleagues – is overshadowed by the tragedy that ordinary Haitians are witnessing. The loss of thousands of lives, in a country that at the best of times was not an easy place to call home, the difficulties the survivors face – the extent of distress and anguish is almost inconceivable.

Perhaps the best way to honour our fallen is to reflect on the fact that they lost their lives in the service to others.

Hedi Annabi, Luis Carlos da Costa and many of our colleagues who perished on that fateful day in Haiti last week understood that very well and believed in it. They believed in a United Nations that is trying to make a positive difference in people's lives, every day, they believed that sacrifices become worthwhile when they help improve the daily existence of others even if on the other side of the planet.

Many who have known and worked with Hedi Annabi and Luis Carlos da Casto for years, as I have, understand why their loss is such a shock, and why it remains so difficult to accept their sudden death. They were inspiring figures in their dedication to the United Nations and to the people they worked with. It was their devotion to the cause of the United Nations and to the belief that we can make a difference for millions of people who need it around the world that left its mark on all of us. Hedi, who was Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations for ten years before moving to Haiti, was one of the UN officials who worked day and night to make possible the expansion of UNIFIL in south Lebanon after the war in 2006. Indeed, UN peacekeeping as a whole will remain a lasting legacy of our colleagues. Their achievements can only encourage us to try and follow in their footsteps, in our own work and dedication to the ideas of the Organization that we serve.

But there are hundreds others, UN staff from various countries around the world and from Haiti itself, who were the backbone of MINUSTAH, and who also lost their lives last week or lost family members or people they knew and loved. It is now estimated that roughly 3 million people were affected by last week's devastating earthquake.

In the midst of the pain and the shock that we feel, we realize that living up to the memories of our loved colleagues means continuing with even more determination and commitment the work to help the devastated people of Haiti and others around the world. The United Nations is thankful for the assistance that has already been sent to Haiti, including from Lebanon.

Our thoughts are with the families and loved ones of the victims and with the people of Haiti.
