

# Dick Lugar

## U.S. Senator for Indiana

Date: 01/28/2010 • <http://lugar.senate.gov>  
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### Opening Statement for Hearing on Haiti

*U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Member Dick Lugar made the following statement at today's hearing.*

I thank the Chairman for calling this important hearing on the rescue, recovery, and longer term reconstruction efforts in Haiti. The unimaginable devastation caused by the earthquake and ongoing aftershocks since January 12, 2010, is one of the worst natural disasters to confront the Western Hemisphere in modern history. Nearly 3 million people have been affected, and authorities estimate that more than 150,000 people have died. My thoughts are with all those who have suffered loss.

The crisis situation in Haiti has the potential to destabilize security in the Caribbean. The social instability in Haiti represents a critical concern for the Dominican Republic and could have far-reaching implications if deteriorating conditions induce a mass exodus of Haitians by land and sea.

Immediate action by the United States to provide emergency assistance to Haiti was clearly warranted. The heroic efforts of American relief workers and the international teams of first responders are deeply inspiring. I commend the administration and many of my Senate colleagues who have worked to advance policies and legislation that will hasten Haiti's recovery.

Last week, I called on the Secretary of Homeland Security to grant 18 months of Temporary Protective Status for Haitian immigrants already residing in our country and to grant visa parole for orphans in the midst of adoption proceedings with American parents. The Secretary's quick action on both provisions will ensure that many vulnerable children are united with loving families and that all people of Haitian descent in the United States are in a position to contribute to Haiti's recovery.

A senior economist at the World Bank has projected that Temporary Protective Status could generate an additional \$360 million in remittances sent to Haiti in 2010 – on top of the more than \$1 billion transferred each year since 2006.

I am working with Senator Dodd on a bill that will encourage the IMF to provide debt relief to Haiti and ensure that IMF gold sale surpluses are used for low income countries, including Haiti. The legislation also would explore ways to invigorate economic activity in the country by adjusting U.S.-Haiti trade agreements.

Despite strong support from the United States, sustained international participation in Haiti is vital for its recovery. It is especially important that the international community provide governance assistance to the Haitian people.

The failures and corruption of past Haitian governments contributed greatly to the stress felt by the Haitian people before the earthquake, and the limitations of the current government constrain the prospects for recovery.

These harsh realities, compounded by the significant loss of life that has weakened the government and other institutions in Haiti, compel the international community to consider creative measures. Because of the devastation, Haiti's condition approximates that of failed state.

We should consider an enhanced role for the United Nations in the daily operations of the Haitian government until the country is stable and less dislocated. This would include the provision of food and shelter, reconstruction activities, budgetary affairs, security, and other aspects of governance vital to the Haitian people. The United Nations has the credibility and capacity to perform this role.

The relationship between the United Nations and the Haitian government should be a consensual, cooperative arrangement that preserves Haitian participation in decisions, while ensuring that the resources and expertise of the international community are brought to bear on the daily problems of Haiti. If the UN plays an increased security and recovery role, I believe Haitians will more quickly gather their bearings and begin to rebuild their lives and their country.

A top priority must be developing and implementing a plan to resettle temporarily the millions of internally displaced people, for whom Port-au-Prince has little to offer. Adequate food, water and shelter must be delivered in earnest to these resettlement areas.

I would also encourage the Obama administration to coordinate Haitian-American volunteers into Hometown Associations (HTAs) – small groups of volunteers in the United States who are linked with their former hometowns and institutions in Haiti.

Members of HTAs can serve as interpreters, support the temporary resettlement of refugees, and provide assistance to Haitians who are evacuated to the U.S. for medical treatment not available on the island.

The Haitian-American community is eager to be involved in the recovery of Haiti, but much greater coordination is required to put their skills to full use. Our government should explore ways to partner with NGOs and existing social networking platforms like Facebook and Twitter to facilitate this coordination. Organizing HTAs will increase our ability to leverage the flow of the more than \$1 billion remitted from the United States.

I look forward to the insights of our distinguished panel of witnesses and innovative recommendations on strategies for moving Haiti forward.

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