

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 28, 2008

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to request your Administration make emergency relief for Haiti a high priority, and in no event allocate less than \$60 million for Haiti, when allocating the remaining fiscal 2008 funding from the Title II Food for Peace Program and the resources made available by the \$200 million drawdown of the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust, an action announced by the Secretary of Agriculture on April 14.

As you know, Haiti sits only 600 miles from our shores. It has been wracked by political turmoil throughout its history and is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. In early 2007, U.N. peacekeepers restored stability to the country by driving most gang activity out of Port-au-Prince's notorious slums, and President Préval began to forge ahead with a comprehensive plan for economic growth.

But today Haiti is facing another crisis that threatens to derail this progress. Earlier this month, riots protesting high food prices broke out in the southern city of Les Cayes and quickly spread throughout the country. The rising cost of food has placed additional hardship on Haiti's people, three-quarters of whom live on less than \$2 a day. Additionally, 1 in 5 children is chronically malnourished. A recent *New York Times* story reported that one booming business amid all the gloom is the selling of patties made of mud, oil and sugar typically eaten by the most destitute.

To respond to this crisis, President Préval announced new measures that would reduce the price of a 50-kilogram bag of rice from \$51 to \$43, or by 16%. In the poorest country in the hemisphere, this reduction could mean the difference between eating and going hungry for many destitute families.

The United States must now demonstrate leadership and resolve and help one of its closest neighbors. It is not in the United States' interest for Haiti to descend into turmoil. Therefore, we strongly urge you to provide not less than \$60 million in emergency assistance from Title II funds and the recent drawdown of the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust to the Government of Haiti to enable President Préval to carry out his anti-hunger program for the next six months.

You have often spoken about the need to help those suffering from humanitarian crisis around the world. We must come to the aid of the Haitian people, suffering in our own backyard, at this crucial time.

Sincerely,



Tom Harkin
United States Senator



Jeff Bingaman
United States Senator



Bob Corker
United States Senator



Bill Nelson
United States Senator



Mel Martinez
United States Senator