

Statements by Ministers

Canada and Jamaica have shared a special relationship for many years. The Canadian response to the present tragedy takes this multi-faceted relationship into account.

Phase one consists of the following humanitarian, consular and administrative elements. The first task is to reactivate the Canadian High Commission in Kingston, Jamaica, to enable it to serve as our eyes and ears in Jamaica. As Members may have heard, the High Commission was seriously damaged by the hurricane, and we still have no direct communication links with it. This will involve dispatch of a satellite telecommunication unit and communications personnel. This will be done in co-operation with the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Beatty), who has agreed to send a DND aircraft, which will also include additional consular personnel to be able to provide consular services to Canadians in Jamaica and to help respond to queries of concerned friends and relatives in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Our second task will be to provide emergency humanitarian aid in order to meet the most pressing needs of the people of Jamaica. Our country will raise the Canada fund to one million dollars, an increase of \$600,000. This fund, which is supposed to help meet the socio-economic needs of the people of Jamaica, is administered by the Office of the High Commissioner in Kingston.

I am also pleased to announce that Canada will give international humanitarian aid organizations a cash contribution of one million dollars that will be used immediately to meet the needs of the Jamaican people. An additional one million dollars will be allocated to the relief fund set up by the Office of the High Commissioner of Jamaica in Canada, subject to matching. In fact, Canada will match contributions made by Jamaican and Canadian communities in Canada and credited to the High Commissioner's relief fund.

[*English*]

The third element in Canada's humanitarian response will be our readiness to send a team of Canadians to Jamaica to work closely with the Jamaican Government and to assist in meeting emergency needs and to help assess additional short term needs and Canada's capacity to respond.

[*Translation*]

Phase II of Canada's response will also consist in close co-operation with the government of Jamaica in order to assess long-term requirements for reconstruction and recovery. During the current financial year, Canada is prepared to reallocate \$4 million in the form of government-to-government assistance, as soon as it has further information on Jamaica's priority development needs. Canada will of course see to it that its contribution will, to every possible extent, be coordinated with that of other industrialized and developing countries.

[*English*]

As an initial step in this longer term phase I have asked the Vice President of CIDA's America's Branch to visit Jamaica

as soon as possible for discussions with senior Jamaican officials. His visit will be followed up by other planning missions as appropriate.

[*Translation*]

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would again like to express my heartfelt sympathy to the people and the government of Jamaica after the disastrous impact of Hurricane Gilbert. Canadians from all walks of life have responded consistently and with understanding to the serious problems caused by this disaster. Together, with our Commonwealth partners and other nations, we will help Jamaica recover from this tragedy.

[*English*]

Mr. Roland de Corneille (Eglinton—Lawrence): Mr. Speaker, I wish to express my appreciation to the Minister for having sent to me a copy of her statement. I was happy both to read and to see her commitment to bringing additional financial aid to the people of Jamaica.

The most recent information that I have is that the population of Jamaica, which numbers, I understand, some 2.8 million, has suffered a tremendous amount of damage in terms of the fact that some .5 million people are homeless. This means that one out of six or even one out of five people in Jamaica is without a home. This means that there was tremendous destruction of some 100,000 homes, which we understand are badly damaged. These are the most recent reports that have come to my attention.

I have also learned that Mr. Edward Seaga, the Prime Minister of Jamaica, has indicated that the situation is very grave, that there are no telephones, in effect, operating, that 95 per cent of the people are living without electricity, that the sugar cane, banana and citrus crops have been totally devastated, and that they have declared in the United States—and we have, too, I trust—that that area is a disaster area.

I also understand that there are some 500 Canadians who are living and working there, some at the Bauxite Mining Plant and some at the Alcan Aluminum Plant, and I trust efforts are being made by the Government to assess their situation urgently.

We must address this issue of emergency as our first priority. But it is too human and too common for us to forget the ongoing needs of the people, after the disastrous storm moves on and media coverage stops, and other problems and other disasters in other parts of the world occur.

We must make sure that we keep this issue of Jamaica alive while showing concern for others in the Cayman Islands and in other islands in the Caribbean area, including Mexico, which is about to suffer devastation as well. What other human tragedies occur, of course, must receive our attention, but a special command post, I suggest, should be set up by our Government for aid to Jamaica in order to deal on an ongoing basis with the long-range economic and human disaster. Some of the steps announced by the Minister indicate a desire to be