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# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

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### Opening Statement

**Rep. Elijah E. Cummings, Ranking Member**

**Subcommittee on National Security, Homeland Defense, and Foreign Operations**  
**“USAID: Following the Money”**

**May 11, 2011**

Thank you Chairman Chaffetz and Ranking Member Tierney for convening this hearing.

On January 12, 2010, a 7.0 magnitude earthquake devastated Haiti, causing hundreds of thousands of casualties and severely damaging the national infrastructure.

In the aftermath of that devastation, the U.S. has provided over \$2 billion in vital humanitarian assistance to Haiti. I understand some people have argued that given the current state of our economy and the federal budget, we cannot afford to provide humanitarian aid in countries like Haiti. But I would argue that today we cannot afford to cut foreign aid to Haiti.

After Haiti's long history of exploitation by foreign powers, and a catastrophic natural disaster, U.S. foreign aid to Haiti can make a critical difference for Haitians, as well as for Americans. A more prosperous Haiti is a wealthier trading partner for the United States. In a more stable Haiti, fewer would decide to leave. And a better governed Haiti would lead to a reduction in drug trafficking throughout our hemisphere.

If the United States were to leave or significantly reduce its assistance to Haiti, the country and its citizens would sink further into economic despair. Combined with ineffective political institutions, this desperation could breed disaffection and eventually lead to political instability. It is in our national interest to address these problems before they result in fundamental instability so close to our shores.

Nevertheless, we must ensure that our valuable aid dollars are being spent in an effective and coordinated manner to maximize the long-term benefits to the people of Haiti. With all this good will and support comes the very real possibility of waste, duplication, and inefficiency in the rebuilding and recovery process.

That is why I supported the Assessing Progress in Haiti Act that passed the House yesterday, and will require the President to report to Congress regarding the status of post-earthquake humanitarian, reconstruction, and development efforts in Haiti.

So thank you, Chairman Chaffetz, for convening this important oversight hearing to examine USAID's efforts to measure, monitor, and account for our valuable foreign aid spending.

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