

NON OFFICIAL TRANSLATION

Port-au-Prince, February 7, 2007

Mr. President,

First allow me to present to you and to the American people my deepest sympathy for the losses in human lives and the material damages caused by the tornadoes that have recently struck your country on February 5.

Allow me also to renew my thanks for your administration's support toward the Haitian people. The HOPE Law for example contributes today to the creation of many jobs in Haiti. Unfortunately the benefits from that law are being undermined by the impact upon our economic and social structures of the massive deportations of our fellow citizens looking for better living conditions in your country.

Within this context, Mr. President, I wish to revisit our May 2007 exchange on U.S. immigration policy during my official visit in Washington. I conveyed to you then my apprehensions regarding the resulting impact that maintaining the deportation policy of illegal Haitian immigrants back to their country of origin could have on our fragile economy. You were receptive to the fact that the limited resources at the disposal of the Haitian government do not allow us to insure the reintegration of the deported into our society. We both promised then to the Haitians living in the United States that their preoccupation would find a solution within the new legislation being discussed in the US Congress. From my offices in Port-au-Prince, I watched with admiration the tremendous efforts you personally put forth in forging a coalition to achieve immigration reform; and with great pain when unfortunately this new law was not passed.

I therefore write to ask you to reconsider that problem and grant temporary protection status (TPS) to the illegal Haitians living in the United States. Following the passage of hurricane Mitch over Nicaragua and Honduras in 1998, and following the earthquakes in Salvador in 2001, the United States, recognizing the importance of remittances from expatriates in the process of rebuilding those countries, granted their citizens temporary protection status, a privilege they are still benefitting from to this day.

During the past few years, our country has had to face similar natural disasters. Recently the Western, South-eastern, Southern, Central, North-eastern and North-western Departments of Haiti were devastated by tropical storm Noel. It will take years for our fellow citizens living within those departments to recover from the consequences of that storm and of the other natural disasters that preceded it. On May 26, 2004, for example, floods along our border with the Dominican Republic left several thousands dead or missing and tens of thousands homeless. On September 2004, tropical storm Jeanne caused more than two thousand deaths and several thousands wounded; she destroyed thousands of homes and large tracks of fertile land, leaving behind a large number of persons homeless or without food or potable water.

Mr. President, beside permitting to maintain the flow of remittances supporting the thousands of unfortunate people in Haiti and consequently reducing the risks of illegal migration, the extension of the TPS to Haitians would protect the children born on US soil as well as their parents, and would enable my government to concentrate its limited resources upon economic and political reconstruction instead of having to provide social services to other deported and their family.

My government is setting the groundwork to create the conditions for sustainable economic growth by working toward strengthening political stability, modernizing the institutions of the state of Haiti and increasing foreign investments, while giving specific attention to reconstruction projects that are indispensable to face the needs of our people in terms of infrastructure, housing, employment, education and health care.

This remains a time of hope in Haiti. With UN and international help, the conditions that for the moment prevent our nationals from returning safely to Haiti will begin to be addressed as we rebuild our country, as in the case of other countries to which TPS has been granted.

I therefore respectfully request your consideration of the above positions, which I am convinced can only further the interests of both our countries.

Please accept, Mr. President, the expression of my highest consideration.

René Préal

His Excellency  
Georges W. Bush  
President  
United States of America