



Press Conference in Haiti

Josette Sheeran Shiner, Under Secretary for Economic, Business, and Agricultural Affairs

Port-Au-Prince, Haiti

March 25, 2006

Press Attachée: (in French): Good morning. Thank you for coming today. I would like to introduce the United States Undersecretary for Economic, Business and Agricultural Affairs, Mme. Josette Sheeran Shiner. She will make a statement first, and then take your questions. Madame Shiner?

Undersecretary Shiner: Well, I want to thank you for coming today. I've had an excellent visit to Haiti. I've come to underscore our government's message to the Haitian people, which is -

Translator: (interrupts, translation in Creole) I'm sorry, ma'am

Undersecretary Shiner: Thank you...at this very important moment in Haiti's history, with a new, democratically-elected president, President-elect Préval, and elections coming up – second round in April, and we look forward to local elections also – that this is a moment when the international community – the United States in particular – really want to join with Haiti in partnership.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

Undersecretary Shiner: I was able, here in Port-au-Prince, to meet with President-elect Préval, some of his key advisors, the business community, the NGO community, to hear their views, and listen and learn about what this moment is in Haiti and the future.

Translator: (starts to translate in Creole) I'm sorry, ma'am. That was too long for me...can you please pick up the last part with...

Undersecretary Shiner: Business community?

Translator: Yes, I did say that, and NGOs

Undersecretary Shiner: NGOs. President-elect and key advisors.

Translator: OK(resumes translation in Creole)

Undersecretary Shiner: But my first step in coming to Haiti was to go up north to Capotille to speak with the people of Haiti about how they view this moment.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

Undersecretary Shiner: And I was able to see some small business there, some work by women there, to visit a school and I found the people of Haiti hopeful about their future and really wanting the international community to understand the hopes of Haitian people.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

Undersecretary Shiner: Thank you, and I'll take your questions.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

Question 1 [Lionel LaFortune, Haiti Progrès] (translated): During your meetings with the President-elect and the finance minister, did you speak about the issue of petroleum, because Haiti imports a great deal of it from the United States? And what is your opinion of PetroCaribe – the program initiated by President Chavez?

Undersecretary Shiner: We did discuss Haiti's very significant energy needs.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

Undersecretary Shiner: We know that Haiti is a very beautiful country, and we need to find solutions for the energy needs of the Haitian people that get beyond the use of charcoal so that we do not have continued deforestation.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

Undersecretary Shiner: In addition, we know that in order for Haiti to provide jobs, it needs to have businesses, and those businesses need energy, and it is why the United States has put as a top priority in its aid, making sure that we address the gaps in fuel in Port-au-Prince and other areas, and it's been a priority on our part to really work with Haiti to solve not only short-term but long-term energy needs.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

Undersecretary Shiner: So our focus was on U.S. programs and how we can ensure that we're helping solve some of those problems.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

Undersecretary Shiner: Thank you

Translator: (translation in Creole)

Question 2 [Rotchild-Jean François, Radio Métropole and stringer for VOA] (translated): I know that the agricultural sector is very dear to the heart of President-elect Préval. I would like to know if, in your discussions, the United States proposed plans to help the agricultural sector, such as passing HOPE or other types of beneficial projects?

Undersecretary Shiner: Thank you very much. I also found agriculture very much on President-elect Préval's mind.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

Undersecretary Shiner: We had a very good discussion. I think Haiti, for example, must have the best mangoes in the world – they're so delicious – and we talked about how to help provide more jobs and more production and more exports to help the Haitian people.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

Undersecretary Shiner: And we look forward to working in partnership with the new government and the Haitian people to really develop programs that can help diversify and look at exports, and help bring more market conditions to the agriculture sector in Haiti. I think that's a very important challenge for the new government.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

Undersecretary Shiner: This is important not only to fighting malnutrition in Haiti itself, but also in providing jobs and exports.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

Undersecretary Shiner: We talked about some practical ideas, such as bringing experts from the U.S. private sector to come and look once Haiti sets its national vision of what it wants to do in agriculture.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

Undersecretary Shiner: I also inspected UN programs in the north to look at how they can be more effective, including a cassava plant that produces cassava bread and employs 20 people in Capotille.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

Undersecretary Shiner: So we very much know that this is an important sector with great potential, but we need to do a lot of work together and within Haiti, and then bilaterally, and with multilateral donors to really get this on track.

Press Attachée (in French): I'm sorry, this will be the last question.

Question 3: I'm Jean-Pierre LeRois, also a stringer for VOA. First I would like to congratulate you for your impressive career, and you mentioned earlier, but you were not specific about, a mission – a trade mission or commercial mission – coming to Port-au-Prince after Préval's taking office. Do you have any specific time for that, or has the U.S. administration already planned that?

Translator: (translation in Creole)

Undersecretary Shiner: I love your question, because I find in Haiti people ready to do business.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

Undersecretary Shiner: Step one is really hearing from the new government what its vision is for Haiti's development.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

Undersecretary Shiner: And I know President-elect Préval has, as number-one on his list, to come up with a unified vision, across the sectors, on the priorities for development.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

Undersecretary Shiner: But it is our feeling, that when we understand Haiti's own vision for which sectors in agriculture to develop, and which have the most potential, then we can look at trying to connect that vision with the private sector, and the United States, and also with the investments that we are making through our aid and elsewhere, so that will be a very important process.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

Undersecretary Shiner: We know that Haiti needs practical solutions to real problems.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

Undersecretary Shiner: And I found that very much to be President-elect Préval's mind – is practical solutions to real problems

Translator: (translation in Creole)

Undersecretary Shiner: So the next round of elections are key, local elections, and then we really are ready to stand in partnership with Haiti to find those practical solutions.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

Undersecretary Shiner: Thank you very much.

Translator: *(translation in Creole)*

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