



Pakistan Earthquake Relief Effort

Statement by U.S. Head of Delegation, Andrew S. Natsios, USAID Administrator

South Asia Earthquake Reconstruction Conference
Islamabad, Pakistan
November 19, 2005

On behalf of President Bush and the American people, I would like again to offer our sincere condolences to the people of Pakistan who have suffered so greatly over the past six weeks following one of the worst natural disasters in recent years. U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker and I visited yesterday a displaced persons camp in the earthquake zone, spoke with people who survived the catastrophe, and flew over the disaster areas. I have seen time and time again the courage and resilience that people demonstrate when faced with such challenges, and the Pakistani people have shown their resourcefulness and strength in this crisis. The first and most effective responders in natural disasters are those who are most directly affected.

In the past year, Americans experienced among the most devastating natural disasters in our own history. As we were assisted so generously by so many of our friends from around the world following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the United States pledges today our continuing support to our friend and ally, Pakistan, following this catastrophe. I want to thank the Government of Pakistan for coordinating and organizing this conference on reconstruction and wish to convey my particular appreciation to Secretary General Kofi Annan for drawing the world's attention to the crisis.

In recent years, President Bush committed the United States to assist Pakistan with \$3 billion in foreign and security assistance over the 2005-2009 fiscal years. News of the quake brought us to pledge \$50 million in relief funds immediately following the earthquake, which have been used for shelter for tens of thousands of people and medical supplies for over a hundred thousand people. The United States military has provided up to 24 helicopters vital for delivering relief supplies, two mobile emergency hospitals to treat the sick and injured, an engineering unit and heavy machinery to open roads and clear debris, all supported by 1,200 U.S. military personnel currently in Pakistan.

We raised our commitment to \$156 million at the Geneva pledging conference. And to underscore our commitment to Pakistan in its time of need, I am pleased to announce today that the United States increases our pledge to a total of \$510 million for relief and reconstruction. This includes \$300 million in cash, \$110 million in military in-kind support for relief operations, and \$100 million in U.S. private contributions.

President Bush has asked five of the United States' most prominent corporate chief executive officers to lead a private fundraising effort for the newly-created [South Asia Earthquake Relief and Reconstruction Fund](#). These chief executive officers visited Pakistan as part of a U.S. Presidential Delegation earlier this week to view the devastation and came away shaken by the scope of the destruction but heartened by the response of the world community and the resilience of the Pakistani people. I am confident that they will reach the \$100 million goal they have set for their efforts.

This conference is timely, and will help us develop a clearer understanding of the challenges we are likely to face, and enable us to determine how to proceed collectively as we move from relief to reconstruction. I would like to associate my government with the ten strategic principles which should frame the reconstruction effort described in the Asian Development Bank and World Bank needs assessment. They are thoughtful and useful guidance for all donor governments, NGOs, and international organizations to follow in providing assistance to the Pakistani government in this massive reconstruction effort. These principles will indeed help Pakistan not only to rebuild, but to "build back better." I might add that I think there is so much depth to these ten principles that we ought to use them internationally as a template for all future reconstruction efforts after natural disasters.

In response to priority areas set by the Government of Pakistan, the United States Government will provide reconstruction assistance in four areas – education, health, employment programs, and shelter. The United States stands ready to rebuild shattered schools and health facilities to hasten the affected areas' return to normalcy. We also plan to invest in programs to provide training and resources so people in affected areas can once again earn their own living and regain economic independence. Homes and public buildings must be rebuilt using earthquake resistant engineering standards which will protect the Pakistani people from future disasters.

In conclusion, I would once again like to thank the Government of Pakistan for hosting the conference today. This coming week, Americans will celebrate our own Thanksgiving holiday, where we thank God for what we are fortunate to have, and remember those who face difficulty. The American people are fortunate to have a friend in the Pakistani people, and we know that today you face enormous challenges. We stand with you in your hour of need.

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