



Chapter 15

HAITI

From Earthquake to Heartbreak

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"Something terrible has happened," UN spokesman Martin Nesirky told me. "it's very serious, but it's too soon to know how bad." I had just returned to the residence from a two-day retreat with senior advisors, but had heard about the Port-au-Prince earthquake immediately after it happened at 6 p.m. Tuesday evening, January 12, 2010. Within the hour we had learned that the five-story United Nations headquarters building – which would have been nearly full at 5 p.m.— had collapsed in the magnitude 7.0 quake. It would be impossible to know more before sunrise.

The UN had more than 9,057 international staff in Haiti at the time, including 8,500 peacekeepers from forty-seven countries serving in the UN Stabilization Mission for Haiti (MINUSTAH). The peacekeeping mission was created by the Security Council in 2004 to assist in Haiti's restoration of law and order after a coup; it was specifically tasked with supporting the country's hapless civilian police against the armed gangs that controlled the sprawling Cite Soleil slum. The criminal gangs were destabilizing the country and much of the region, thriving on international drug-running and a kidnapping economy that preyed on the general population. But the mission was not beloved by the Haitians, who often thought the peacekeepers stirred up violence instead of quelling it. This perception sharpened when people noticed that the peacekeepers were not assisting with rescue and emergency repairs. In fact, they were assigned to patrol the increasingly dangerous tent camps for crime and assault, problems that grew as time wore on and many Haitians grew angrier and more frustrated.

Our headquarters was in the seventy-five-room Christopher Hotel, a solid breeze-block building that was pancaked, one floor dropping down on the next, trapping scores of UN staff. These heroic people were doing difficult jobs, and at that hour I knew many would be talking on the phone, chatting in the hallways, completing paperwork, and engaging in the administrative life of civilian and military deployment. I'm sure several staff members on the swing shift were just waking up in their shared bedrooms on the Christopher's upper floors. It was too much to absorb; I had to sit down.

I spent much of the night on the telephone. First, I summoned my senior advisors for an early morning emergency meeting. As news of the disaster spread, the phone rang with offers of aid and support from capitals around the world. I monitored the situation from my residence, apprehension growing with each update from Port-au-Prince and the UN command center in New York. Later that evening I spoke with UN Ambassador Susan Rice and former U.S. President

Bill Clinton, whom I had appointed as the UN secretary-general's special envoy for Haiti only six months earlier. Talking to these trusted partners did not lessen the shock or the horror.

The questions rushed at me all night: How many dead? How much emergency assistance would Haiti immediately require? What would aftershocks do to the rescue efforts? And, of course, what was the fate of thousands of UN peacekeepers and staff?

REALITY EXCEEDS OUR IMAGINATION

By dawn Wednesday morning, MINUSTAH was sending photos and information via email from the part of the *Toussaint Louverture* Airport that was still standing, but these updates only hinted at the scope of the destruction. Information was incomplete because we could not receive reports from some of the hardest-hit areas. It would be days before we could assess, or even quantify, the damage because it was impossible for anyone to get around. Satellite photographs showed the scale of the destruction, and helicopters identified the hardest hit neighborhoods. But the human toll required human intelligence.

I convened an urgent 7:50a.m. Haiti crisis management meeting with my senior advisors: Deputy Secretary General Asha-Rose Migiro, UN Development Program Administrator Helen Clark, Under Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations Alain Le Roy, Undersecretary General for Humanitarian Affairs John Holmes, Chief of Staff Vijay Nambiar, and Deputy Chief of Staff Kim Won-soo. It was clear that no one had slept more than an hour or two, but each was focused on his or her brief, and we quickly forged an early course of action.

The Department of Peacekeeping and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs had worked through the night prioritizing what Haiti would likely need most and how to get it there. This would be a global effort: The World Food Program in Rome, UNICEF in New York, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Geneva, and the World Bank in Washington all swung into action to plan, execute, and fund emergency relief. Capitals around the world were making the same calculations.

John Holmes and Alain Le Roy presented a rough plan to me later that morning. Even at this most preliminary stage, we knew that Haiti would require tens of millions of dollars for massive air lifts of food, medicine, tarps, and other emergency supplies. Haiti had been on our radar for years, and humanitarian experts and aid officials had been well aware of Haitians' dire existence for more than two decades. A massive earth quake could only add to the misery. I was confident that donors would not turn their backs on Haiti.

The UN aid operation would be one of the most complex, requiring logistical creativity and cooperation. The airport and seaport were both partially destroyed, and there was no way to deliver aid throughout the rubble city. The epicenter of the earthquake was just sixteen miles west of Port-au-Prince, and the capital city had been shaken down into the wreckage-choked ground. But that was all we knew. Television cameras had not yet arrived. Our satellite communications were nonresponsive. Email was erratic. Many of our surviving colleagues in Port-

au-Prince who would be coordinating aid delivery and distribution were overpowered with shock and grief by the events of the last twenty hours. For most of the night, it was impossible to know exactly what was happening just two hours off the coast of Miami. But we could picture it.

At four UN compounds around Port-au -Prince, able-bodied staff had worked through the night with ladders, flashlights, and shovels to find their coworkers. Many of the survivors, unharmed but surely overwhelmed, joined the search and helped move the injured to safety. These men and women also found the crushed or suffocated bodies of their colleagues. Imagining the scene, I too felt airless and overwhelmed. The United Nations lost 102 people in a matter of minutes, by far the single largest loss of life for the organization in peace, war, terrorist attacks, or previous natural disasters. I resisted the early news that my two most senior representatives were among the dead. I felt like the earthquake had rocked us almost as hard as it did the people who needed our help. More than a quarter-million Haitians were killed in th e same quake. The tragedy linked the United Nations and Haiti in a bond of grief, however short-lived.

THE LONGEST DAYS

Thirteen long hours after the earthquake, UN headquarters in New York was the closest most of the world could get to Port-au -Prince. We were deluged by international journalists eager for an assessment of the damage and news of our emergency response. The UN communications office buzzed, verifying information as quickly as it was available. My former spokesperson, Michele Montas, a prominent Haitian journalist who had recently returned home, sent regular updates through her tears.

At 10:30 a.m., UN Security Council President Li Baodong, China's permanent representative, opened a scheduled meeting with a moment of standing silence. My thoughts were racing and unsorted. I tried to focus my compassion, but swirl of questions constantly intruded. By noon we had initial damage assessments: at least two million survivors would need shelter, food, water, and electricity. The dead-estimates – ranged from thirty thousand to fifty-five thousand – would need to be quickly buried. I stood before the cameras again and issued an emergency appeal for urgent humanitarian assistance: tents and tarps, generators, medicine, medical personnel, dump trucks, cranes, back-hoes, water purification units, and, of course, money. Television news had begun showing pictures of unfathomable devastation, and even the reporters were subdued by the scale of the disaster.

I spent most of my time from Wednesday morning until I left to visit Port-au-Prince on Sunday, January 17, with our humanitarian response coordinators who briefed me several times a day. I updated the press, addressed the General Assembly, and beseeched nearly two dozen governments to contribute funds, deliver cargo, and share technical expertise. Each one promised specific assistance. The one world leader I could not reach was Rene Préal, the president of Haiti.

U.S. President Barack Obama immediately took my call the morning after the earthquake and extended his and Michelle Obama's condolences. He said the U.S. military was already preparing

to send supplies by sea, air, and overland through the Dominican Republic. The first U.S. military and cargo ships would soon be off the coast. It took hours and hours to return all the calls received from capitals. Even the poorest nations offered financial and technical support. Every leader I spoke to in those first days expressed horror and offered condolences for the United Nations' heavy losses.

We needed vast expertise. The living required immediate road clearance, medical support, potable water and mobile filtration systems, food, tarps and tents, and myriad other supplies. We also needed heavy machinery and refrigerated trucks and seasoned mortuary personnel who knew how to safely handle the volume of bodies that follow a natural disaster. Governments, aid groups, and even individuals had been promising emergency assistance all morning. The problem was logistics. The airport and seaport were destroyed, making it almost impossible to land supplies or to evacuate the wounded.

General Assembly President Ali Abdussalam Treki of Libya convened a rare emergency session late Wednesday afternoon. By this time, darkness was falling again in Port-au-Prince. "We are still struggling to learn the full extent of the devastation from yesterday's earthquake, but you have all seen the images on television – collapsed hospitals and schools, public buildings in ruins," I said. "Tens of thousands of people are in the streets, without shelter. Uncounted numbers remain trapped in the rubble. Casualties cannot yet be estimated, but they are certain to be heavy. Of Haiti's nine million people, initial reports suggest that roughly a third maybe affected by the disaster. "I told member states I had authorized an initial \$10 million in emergency UN funds and called on them to contribute generously. This was our best estimate of what needed to be spent immediately on the hundreds of thousands of Haitians who might be homeless or injured. We were committed to stabilizing the population and caring for the sick. It was imperative to prevent the "second wave" of mortality that could come from diseases such as dysentery.

My office continued to call every contact number we had for Haitian officials in an effort to reach President Préval. It was impossible; the quake had knocked out communications, and by the middle of the first afternoon I began to fear the worst. I did not know how the UN could function in Haiti without a government to reassure the people and ease our operations. I finally reached the president late Thursday. It was rare for contact to take this long in disasters of this magnitude, but from our brief call, I knew he would not be a proactive partner in the relief effort. To my dismay and concern, President Préval was clearly in shock and unprepared for the crisis ahead. I assured him that the international community had rallied to help his people.

NO NEWS, DWINDLING HOPE

UN headquarters still had no word on the fate of dozens of staff members, including my Special Representative, the veteran Tunisian diplomat Hédi Annabi, and Deputy Special Representative Luiz Carlos da Costa of Brazil. I had known Annabi for nine years and admired him greatly. He was a gifted and creative diplomat whose candid assessments and suggestions were usually spot on. It was likely that Annabi had been in his office at the Christopher Hotel, but I clung to hope while

the operation remained classified as search and rescue. More people could still be pulled from the rubble alive. I named Edmond Mulet, the assistant secretary general for peacekeeping operations, as my interim representative for MINUSTAH. A Guatemalan diplomat, he had served as my first special representative to Haiti and would later serve as my chief of staff. My heart and energy went out to the Haitian people in their time of desperate fear and need, but part of me also felt the need to take care of our UN family first. I knew this was a natural instinct, and I resolved to find enough compassion and strength for everyone.

Thursday morning brought the first good news. The United States was setting up a mobile airport control tower so cargo planes filled with relief could land in Port-au-Prince. I was proud to see my own country, Korea, and China and Japan competing to send in the first excavation packages, which included military engineering units. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was the first foreign dignitary to land, meeting Haitian leaders at the airport.

MAGNITUDE 7

On Sunday, January 17, I flew to Port-au-Prince. It was a very long day and among the saddest days I had ever endured. I had no words for the destruction I saw below. Nearly all the buildings, including several UN facilities, were shaken flat. Even the Parliament building sustained gaping damage. I imagined that I could feel the capital's collective stress and pain while we were still in the air. Before our plane landed at Port-au-Prince, I instructed my UN staff to drink as much water as possible. "do not expect water and food all day long. Do not even carry water. Show our solidarity with the Haitian people."

Upon arrival at the airport, I met with President Rene Préval, but he seemed lost. He had not even sent a message of hope to the Haitian people, and I strongly urged him to do so. "Mr. President, why don't you use the UN radio and reassure the nation. Tell them what you are doing; tell them help is on the way. Tell them to be strong." But he seemed so shaken that he didn't know what to do. In fact he was terrified. He was panicked. It had been five days, and he still didn't know what to say or what to do for his own country! Help was finally arriving from around the world, and we would need strong partners in the Haitian government. I was very concerned.

The security situation was deteriorating with every day and night that people could not find their loved ones or were sleeping in the streets. It was important to show the Haitian people that the United Nations would not abandon them. I insisted on meeting the Haitian people and hearing their voices. I wanted to see the situation from the ground as well as from the air. So I went for a walk through Port-au-Prince. Shockingly, the Presidential Palace and other official buildings were in ruins. Whole blocks — whole neighborhoods! — had been leveled. Everywhere we went, I heard the sounds of crying and yelling.

After I spoke to the president, I wanted to be with our surviving staff at the Christopher Hotel site. The Haitian sun beatdown mercilessly on a field of smashed concrete and twisted metal. UN staffers were trying not to cry, and some were succeeding. They had already been through the kind of disaster no one can be prepared for, and everyone knew colleagues who were still

missing. By now workers had recovered the bodies of Hédi Annabi and Luiz Carlos da Costa, and they would fly home with me that night.

I was trying hard to keep my breath under control as I took in this scene. A Haitian staff member handed me the UN flag that had flown over the MINUSTAH building. The blue and white fabric—ripped and grimy with concrete dust— was folded into the triangle of tribute to our fallen. I didn't know the man's name, but his eyes were red and puffy and one hand was crudely bandaged. His whole body radiated fatigue and pain. I wasn't expecting this moment. I felt a punch of sadness and horror as I took the flag, which so perfectly symbolized our losses. I was overcome and, momentarily, speechless. Finally, I thanked him and told the staff to be strong. Our missing colleagues would want us to continue our work for the Haitian people, I said reflexively, aware that my voice was shaking and too low for most of them to hear over the sound of the search parties.

There were thousands of Haitians, young people, out in the sun because there was no other place for them to go. People were just wandering around, not knowing what to do. I wondered why they weren't clearing roads so machinery and trucks could get through. But they couldn't; these people seemed to be in shock too. They surrounded me, shouting for help. I knew they didn't mean me any harm, but so many people crowded near me, all talking or yelling in Creole and gesturing emphatically, and it left me feeling frightened. It became difficult to move in such a large, unruly crowd, and my security team wanted to take me back to the airport. But I wasn't ready to go. I watched a group of boys digging at a collapsed building, shouting to someone inside. I wanted to stay, but we had to keep moving.

When I returned to the airport late that afternoon, I was wrung out from an unbearably emotional day. And then I saw the two caskets carrying the bodies of SRSR Hédi Annabi and DSRSG da Costa. The caskets were draped with UN flags, ready to be loaded into the plane's cargo bay. For the second time that day, the greatest grief overwhelmed me. My breath caught on a swallowed cry, and my knees shook. But I remained upright I think I said a few remarks of praise and solace. I barely remember the flight home, and I fell into a deep but brief sleep as we drove back to the residence from the airport.

The following morning, I immediately told Helen Clark, the administrator of the UN Development Program, that the Haitians were dazed and would struggle to undertake relief efforts on their own. We decided to initiate the Cash for Work Program, paying \$5 per person per day to do whatever they could do without machinery: clear the street of rocks or pebbles; move trash or whatever they could lift. Tens of thousands of people were willing to help, and they did as much as they could by hand. The country needed heavy cranes, but we still didn't have them.

During these initial days, UN member states contributed money and equipment, soldiers and civilians, technical experts and aid workers. Over the next few weeks, my representative Edmond Mulet and his deputy Tony Banbury worked heroically to expand and organize our presence on the ground. SRSR Mulet was particularly devoted to the country's reconstruction, and he was

loved and respected by the Haitian people. When I visited Haiti, many Haitians praised him for his compassion and leadership.

Caribbean and Latin American nations sent army units to restore critical infrastructure and assist in the distribution of aid. People saw this and were grateful, or at least supportive. With humanitarian support handled by international troops, UN peacekeepers were assigned to the overcrowded makeshift camps to prevent the soaring incidents of rapes and robberies. Of course, they could not prevent every assault. Unfortunately, many Haitians saw them only in the camps and assumed they were not addressing the country's acute needs. Inevitably, this tension flared into open hostility. By the time cholera came to Haiti in October 2010, the Haitians were willing to believe that the peacekeepers were responsible.

THE WORLD PITCHES IN

The UN donor's conference for Haiti on March 31, 2010, was organized by the United Nations with President Clinton, and it raised pledges of \$9.9 billion in a single day — by far the largest single mobilization of international assistance in UN history. In my time as secretary-general, I've led or participated in conferences for Syria, Afghanistan, Palestine, Lebanon, and several other countries in crisis, but I have never seen such a successful conference or stronger support.

The meeting was held at UN headquarters, with Special Envoy Bill Clinton to my left and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to my right—typical positions for my chief diplomatic representative and a representative for the convening country. "Usually they sit together," I said to laughter, "but not today." Although I did not mention it publicly, I knew Haiti was special to them; the Clintons had visited as newlyweds in 1975.

The international community was especially generous to Haiti, in part because of the scale of utter destruction and the UN's history of military, political, and humanitarian engagement. But Haiti also benefited from this being the first financial pledging conference of its kind in a while. Governments were not yet suffering from donors' fatigue.

Meanwhile, the Haitian diaspora mobilized resources small and large to powerful and still unheralded effect. Hundreds of thousands of Haitians living abroad contributed money and services, undertook fund-raising and political and humanitarian efforts, and returned to share in the heavy lifting. Haitian businesses kept charity bowls by the cash register, and athletes and actors who had never even been to Haiti made six-figure contributions. It was impossible to keep track of it all.

Haiti also struck a nerve with Hollywood. Scores of entertainment and sports stars prominently pledged money for emergency relief or targeted reconstruction and urged their fans to do the same. Haitian singer and music producer Wyclef Jean advocated tirelessly for his country's rescue and reconstruction, leveraging his musical connections for two superstar events. His Hope for Haiti Now telethon raised \$61 million in two hours, and a fund-raising song featuring many of the same artists played everywhere that winter from car radios to international sporting events.

I lost track of the celebrities who visited Haiti that winter and spring: Matt Damon, Susan Sarandon, Demi Moore, John Travolta, Julio Iglesias, and UNICEF good will ambassadors Lionel Messi and Shakira. The popular Colombian singer spoke of her many visits to Haiti over the years. Even Michelle Obama came to Haiti on a trip of support and compassion. But no celebrity seemed able to match the determination of American movie star Sean Penn, who landed in Port-au-Prince days after the earthquake and stayed for two years. He slept in a tent next to the homeless sheltering in the Pétionville camp, joining his Haitian neighbors to clear rubble and carry supplies. I was introduced to Penn and I saw him sweating, running here and there. Not only did he raise awareness of the situation in Haiti, but he also contributed personally to the relief effort.

I am even more grateful to the countless medical professionals who closed their own practices to come to Haiti. Nurses quit their jobs. Laborers and logistics experts traveled at their own expense. This crisis touched more people, more deeply, than many other unimaginable disasters. For example, we didn't see teachers going to Lebanon or Afghanistan on their summer breaks, but they came to Haiti.

After an initial period of emergency rescue and aid operations, the UN expanded its focus to Haiti's mid- and long-term reconstruction. President Clinton worked his connections to mobilize corporate donations. He even brought many business leaders to Haiti to drum up investment and jobs. Several of them, in turn, encouraged other corporate leaders to do the same. In March 2009, President Clinton and I visited factories and schools, met workers and students, and encouraged them all to work hard and stay in Haiti while the international community was sending in continuous support.

At the same time, I grew even more disappointed with Haiti's political leaders who were divided and fighting among themselves. President Préval, and later his successor President Michel Martelly, was not able to get parliamentary support for his initiatives, and in-fighting stalled rebuilding projects for an unconscionably long time. I was furious that the lawmakers could not unite to rebuild their country but instead seemed to be living in different worlds. I knew that only a very long-term commitment and a torrent of resources would bring a measure of stability to Haiti again.

THE GREAT UNDOING

But stability never came to Haiti. Instead, a ravaging cholera epidemic took hold and still flares up periodically. In October 2010, only ten months after the earthquake, several people in the northern countryside contracted the highly contagious disease. The seemingly isolated cholera cases raised no alarms for UN field staff or the peacekeeping base nearby. But the bacteria — spread by infected water and human waste — got into a small tributary that feeds the Artibonite River, which thousands used for drinking, washing, and bathing.

Aid workers reported that cholera quickly roared into a deadly epidemic of breathtaking size and speed. It sluiced through tent cities erected for survivors of the January earthquake, and then it

spread beyond to the worn-down population. The disease's strength was compounded by Haiti's broken infrastructure, overcrowding, and a paucity of healthcare. In six years, cholera killed more than 9,000 and sickened 750,000 people in the capital and beyond. It was the world's largest outbreak of cholera, and Haiti's first in more than a century.

This disaster forever destroyed the United Nations' reputation in Haiti. I am sickened that the country has not fully recovered. The Haitians believed UN peacekeepers brought the disease to their country, singling out the newly arrived battalion from Nepal, which had just left a similar strain behind them. In response to the growing outrage, I appointed an independent panel of scientists, each of whom had a specialty in cholera. Chairman Alejandro Cravioto (Brazil), Claudio E. Lanata (Peru), Daniele Lantagne (USA) and Balakrish Nair of the National Institute of Cholera and Enteric Diseases in India did not fully exonerate the United Nations but found that “a confluence of circumstances” contributed to the outbreak. However, the World Health Organization traced the source of the cholera epidemic directly to MINUSTAH, and specifically to the Nepalese peacekeepers. WHO is part of the UN system but functions independently, and their report found that the Nepalese barracks had damaged pipes that leaked sewage into the tributary.

Given the disparities, I ordered another investigation. That report, released on August 8, 2016, found no doubt that the Nepalese peacekeepers — specifically, a sanitation contractor — allowed fecal waste to contaminate the waters. WHO also urged the UN to accept legal responsibility. UN officials, including me, were still not convinced, but there was no denying the desperation of their situation. It was vital to commit to long-term development projects to improve sanitation, sewage, and health care systems. I ordered UN agencies to commit all available medical and engineering resources to support sanitation construction in hard-hit areas. UN staff also worked with Haitian health experts to orchestrate massive distributions of emergency kits, including soap and water purification tablets.

THE LAWYERS COME KNOCKING

I was incredulous — no, shocked — when, in November 2011, five hundred Haiti victims and their families brought a class-action lawsuit against the United Nations and me as its secretary-general in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, seeking \$40 billion in damages for negligence and wrongful death. This was damaging to our reputation, but at first I was not as worried as I could have been. Every member state has agreed that the UN and its employees cannot be prosecuted in national courts for any reason, and we have several precedents throwing out these suits. But I was concerned that this lawsuit could set a disastrous precedent for the organization, opening it up to legal challenges that would curtail our humanitarian, advisory, and development work. It wasn't clear whether a successful suit could also be used to nullify the similar status of forces agreement with every government hosting or participating in peace operations.

The legal challenge lasted five years as lawyers for the plaintiffs demanded that the United Nations pay reparations. The UN disputed that we had brought cholera to Haiti and claimed

diplomatic immunity under the Geneva Convention, which establishes our diplomatic privileges and immunity. I thought this lawsuit was fraudulent from the beginning, and I was incensed every time I thought about this attempt to extort money from the United Nations. The effort required a substantial amount of financial backing and a knowledge of the U.S. legal system, and it was difficult to believe that the Haitian people would divert their resources from helping their own people to obtain either.

The firm representing the survivors is based in the United States but had an independent organization registered in Haiti to represent cholera victims in their suit against the United Nations. Several of the senior lawyers have a history of bringing class action lawsuits, such as suing Libya for the Lockerbie bombing. I thought they were after a big fee and media coverage. I was advised to say as little as possible when questioned by diplomats or the press. Nonetheless, my heart bled for the Haitian people who have been whipped by catastrophe and criminal political leaders throughout the country's history. I felt we had not done enough to stem the epidemic or care for the sick.

It was a huge relief when District Court Judge J. Paul Oetken decided that the court had no jurisdiction over the case and dismissed it. The date was January 9, 2015, exactly five years after the earthquake struck.

I made another of my six visits to Haiti in July 2014. I felt it was a necessary pilgrimage to meet affected families, one of the most difficult journeys I made as secretary-general. I heard stories of families splintered, breadwinners lost, orphans suffering, and children, partners, and parents gone forever. As a husband, father, and grandfather, I felt tremendous heartache at the pain so many families have had to endure. I will never forget it.

The lawsuits and the lingering cholera crisis were draining, not just for me but for much of the UN's staff. Of course, an appeal was inevitable. Thankfully, on August 18, 2016, a federal Court of Appeals judge upheld the United Nations' absolute immunity in U.S. courts, citing a "lack of subject-matter prosecution." I was too relieved for words.

REGRET AND RECOVERY

With my term as secretary-general drawing to an end, I wanted to address the cholera tragedy fully, publicly, and honestly. Our delayed and insufficient early response had made the tragedy worse. Although I had made some remarks the day the lawsuit was settled, these words weren't enough for me. I had to set the record straight before my tenure as secretary-general ended.

It was important to reinforce the commitment of member states and the UN itself and to ensure that an epidemic such as this one never happens again. The Haitians needed to hear it too. So did governments and people. "We simply did not do enough with regard to the cholera outbreak and its spread in Haiti," I told the General Assembly on December 1, 2016, an apology I delivered in English, French, and Creole. "We are profoundly sorry for our role."

In December 2016, I announced a two-track approach to eradicate the cholera bacteria in Haiti and assist those directly affected by the epidemic. Track 1 is a significant long-term effort to address unsanitary living conditions so waterborne diseases, such as cholera, will not flourish. This effort was already underway. In the last year of my term, we made great progress in prevention, vaccinating more than one million people and nearly tripling the number of rapid-response health teams that could contain new outbreaks.

Track 2, to directly aid those affected by cholera, was more complex. This requires identification of the victims, a frequently impossible undertaking after a natural disaster such as the earthquake. Many Haitians were already left undocumented because most records were destroyed in the earthquake or in subsequent hurricanes. As important, any effort to provide a meaningful benefit to family members and others affected by the outbreak will depend on reliable and sufficient funding. The likely price tag for these efforts is about \$400 million, to be financed by voluntary contributions to a special fund established for this purpose. I am sorry to say that this sum has overwhelmed the UN's most reliable contributors. Member states have contributed only a fraction of that amount, and much of it is earmarked for specific development initiatives. Many developing nations have said they cannot afford to pay more than the assessments. Several ambassadors told me that their governments do not want to pay UN debts stemming from our own negligence. I disputed that position in the most strenuous terms, but there is still nothing I can do about it.

The cholera epidemic continues to poison the Haitian people's relationship with the United Nations. I hope member states and other contributors remember that we have a moral responsibility to commit to these programs for the sake of the Haitian people and the UN organization itself. The cholera epidemic in Haiti remains a blemish on UN peacekeeping and on the organization worldwide. I know I will continue to regret our role.

My hope is for the United Nations to become more aware of the threats facing the people we are trying to help. We must take more decisive action when even one of those challenges is detected.