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Haiti Frets Over Aid and Control of Rebuilding

By NEIL MacFARQUHAR

UNITED NATIONS — More than \$1.35 billion has been committed to [Haiti](#) in humanitarian assistance since [the devastating earthquake on Jan. 12](#), but less than \$23 million in cash has been given to the Haitian government so far, leaving President [René Prével](#) beleaguered and wary about the reconstruction.

Mr. Prével will be at the [United Nations](#) on Wednesday to present a reconstruction plan to an international donor conference, with the United States orchestrating an attempt to get 120 nations to commit to nearly \$4 billion over the next 18 months to rebuild Haiti.

Haiti and the donors have yet to agree to a plan on how that money will be disbursed, but a major element is a request for \$350 million for the government for the rest of this year.

"The budget support is fundamental," said [Robert B. Zoellick](#), the president of the [World Bank](#), noting that many donors had resisted this kind of assistance in the past out of concerns over corruption and the government's ability to carry out projects.

Major international donors and the Haitian government itself have said that the rebuilding presented an opportunity to try to break the traditional cycle in which donors finance projects through nongovernmental organizations, bypassing the government.

Too many donors decide what Haiti needs and then find someone to make it happen, Haitian officials said. "In the end, the government has nothing to do with it," said Gabriel Verret, a senior economic adviser to Mr. Prével. "That is the frustration."

To ensure that the government gets to play a role, there are plans to create an interim reconstruction commission, with both donors and the Haitian government signing off on projects and expenditures. The government said Tuesday that the interim commission would be led by Haitian prime minister Jean-Max Bellerive and former President [Bill Clinton](#).

(There has been a certain amount of grumbling around the United Nations about tight control by the State Department over the donor conference, with a senior European diplomat calling it "The Bill and Hillary Show.")

United Nations diplomats said that in private the Obama administration and Haitian officials were still wrangling over the degree of involvement of Haitian government ministries in the reconstruction.

"Préval has been saying, 'Wait, why should we build this parallel structure here,' " said a United Nations diplomat, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the delicate nature of the discussions. He said that the United States was pushing for the commission as a quicker, faster way to rebuild.

The Preval administration has presented a draft law to parliament that would allow him to create such an agency by presidential decree.

Cheryl Mills, chief of staff to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and the point person on Haiti, denied any serious differences, telling a news conference that the government of Haiti was obviously still reeling from the earthquake

"In the beginning I think it is a little unrealistic that they will be able to implement things," she said, noting that 28 out of 29 ministries had collapsed. Ultimately, all sides want the commission to succeed, she said.

In January, the United States offered to meet the payroll of the Haitian police, but insisted on issuing the checks. After the Haitian government realized that its officers would know they were being paid by the United States, it declined the offer and found the money elsewhere, diplomats said.

Correction: March 31, 2010:

The Times reported incorrectly on Wednesday that President Rene Preval will be the co-chair along with former President Bill Clinton of the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission. The Haitian co-chair will be the prime minister, Jean-Max Bellerive.

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