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Rich Nations Call for Haiti Debt Relief

By [ALAN COWELL](#)

PARIS — Broadening the relief effort, the Paris Club of international creditors issued an appeal Tuesday for nations owed money by [Haiti](#) to cancel the debts to help reconstruction after the devastating [earthquake](#) a week ago.

[A statement from the informal grouping](#), which meets each month in Paris and is composed of major industrialized countries, came as international agencies pressed for the provision of greater security to protect the distribution of aid in Haiti and the supply route leading from the neighboring Dominican Republic.

The Paris Club said that last July its members canceled all their claims on Haiti, at that time totaling \$214 million.

“Considering the financing needs that Haiti will face in reconstructing the country, Paris Club creditors call upon other bilateral creditors also to urgently provide full debt cancellation to Haiti,” the statement said.

The response from creditors was not clear. The Paris Club said that Haiti’s public external debt, before factoring in relief offered to very poor countries, totaled \$1.885 billion at the end of September 2008. The appeal came as relief efforts in Haiti were still stymied by bottlenecks and security fears.

The [United Nations Security Council](#) is [expected to agree on Tuesday](#) to send an additional 3,500 soldiers and police officers to Haiti, a move requested by Secretary General [Ban Ki-moon](#) to protect the distribution of emergency supplies and to ensure public order if post-earthquake frustrations boil over.

Thousands of American troops are being deployed in Haiti, but they are expected to concentrate on humanitarian aid, not security, said Alain Le Roy, the head of [United Nations peacekeeping](#) operations.

Aid experts say they view Haiti as a challenging environment in which to operate: even before the earthquake, a United Nations peacekeeping force was deployed there.

Greg Barrow, a spokesman for the [World Food Program](#), said the agency — an arm of the United Nations — wanted “a formal system in place” to ensure security arrangements for the distribution

of food from four “hubs” in Port-au-Prince, the capital, and 40 more such focal points around Haiti.

He said diesel fuel was being shipped in from neighboring Dominican Republic by road and the convoys required a security escort.

Because of the lack of security in Port-au-Prince, he said, “we had to scale back some distributions, not because we weren’t able to reach the people but because we didn’t have security.”

But, he said in a telephone interview, security was not the primary obstacle to the distribution of aid.

“The primary issue is the catastrophic damage to the infrastructure from ports to roads to bridges that affects the ability of all” relief agencies to stream aid to survivors of the earthquake.

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