

**SPEECH FOR AMBASSADOR HANS HERTELL  
DONATION FOR COMMUNITY FIRE FIGHTING PROGRAM  
MAY 6, 2005 – EL NOVILLERO, VILLA ALTAGRACIA**

**MR. MAX PUIG, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR  
ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES;  
MR. JOSE LUIS LUNA PAULINO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
NATIONAL DISASTER COMMISSION;  
MR. MIGUEL ABREU, SUB-SECRETARY OF FORESTRY;  
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:**

I AM VERY PLEASED TO BE HERE WITH YOU TODAY, AT ONE OF THE SITES THAT HAS BEEN UNDER CONSTANT THREAT OF WILDFIRES DURING THE DRAUGHT SEASONS. THE U.S. GOVERNMENT IS PLEASED TO BE ABLE TO PROVIDE SOME FUNDS TO CONTINUE THE TRAINING OF COMMUNITY FIRE BRIGADES AS WELL AS TO EQUIP THESE BRIGADES WITH THE ADEQUATE TOOLS TO CARRY OUT THEIR JOB OF PREVENTING AND COMBATING WILD FIRES. AS WITH THE MOST RECENT WILDFIRE OUTBREAKS, THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE PEOPLE OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC IN TIMES OF CRISIS.

THIS SMALL BUT IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION FOR COMMUNITY FIRE FIGHTING REPRESENTS A VERY SMALL PART OF THE NUMEROUS PROJECTS THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE UNDERTAKING THROUGH U. S. EMBASSY WITH ITS PARTNERS THE NATURE CONSERVANCY (TNC) AND THE INTERNATIONAL RESOURCES GROUP (IRG) TO HELP PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC THROUGH USAID PROGRAMS.

FOR EXAMPLE, WITH THE NATURE CONSERVANCY, WE HAVE DEVELOPED PREVENTIVE COMMUNITY FOREST TRAINING AND CONSERVATION WORK FOR THE PROTECTED AREAS AND BUFFER ZONES IN THE CENTRAL MOUNTAIN RANGE. ALSO, WITH THE INTERNATIONAL RESOURCES GROUP, WE ARE ASSISTING THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TO DEVELOP FORESTRY STANDARDS AND NORMS, MANAGEMENT PLANS. THIS ASSISTANCE ALSO INCLUDES TRAINING TO PARK RANGERS AND FOREST RANGERS IN FOREST FIRE MANAGEMENT.

THE U. S. EMBASSY, THROUGH USAID AND ITS OFFICE OF FOREIGN DISASTER ASSISTANCE -- OFDA, HAS SINCE HURRICANE GEORGES PROVIDED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

AND TRAINING TO FOREST FIRE FIGHTERS FROM THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND TO PRIVATE VOLUNTEERS WHO ARE MEMBERS OF LOCAL COMMUNITY NGOS. AS PART OF ITS ANNUAL TRAINING PROGRAM, OFDA WILL CONTINUE PROVIDING THIS SUPPORT.

UNDER THIS CURRENT GRANT, THE U.S. EMBASSY WILL SUPPORT THE WORK OF THREE USAID PARTNERS -- FUDECO, FLORESTA, AND THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT -- TO EQUIP AND TRAIN A NUMBER OF LOCAL FIRE BRIGADES AND COMMUNITY GROUPS IN FIRE PREVENTION AND SOIL CONSERVATION TECHNIQUES IN VILLA ALTAGRACIA .

IN PARTICULAR, I CONGRATULATE YOU FIRE FIGHTERS FOR COMPLETING YOUR TRAINING AND WISH YOU GREAT SUCCESS AS YOU PUT YOUR TRAINING TO USE TO PREVENT AND COMBAT FOREST FIRES IN THE FUTURE IN EL NOVILLERO.