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**Testimony of WHA Deputy Assistant Secretary Kirsten Madison
House Foreign Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere
September 23, 2008**

Mr. Chairman, I thank you and other members of the Committee for this opportunity to appear before you to speak about the situation in Haiti and Administration's response to hurricane damage in Haiti. The Administration appreciates and welcomes the Committee's concern. We look forward to a constructive dialogue with you as we seek the way forward.

In recent weeks, four successive storms ravaged Haiti and caused significant damage in Cuba and Jamaica. The devastation in Haiti is widespread with extensive damage to housing, agriculture, and public infrastructure and infliction of significant suffering on the Haitian people.

The Administration's response has been immediate and crucial. U.S. Government agencies, including the Agency for International Development, the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Navy, and the U.S. Embassy in Haiti, have put forth an enormous effort to meet Haiti's humanitarian needs in the aftermath of the storms. We have already devoted more than \$29.5 million in emergency food and relief commodities, which are now flowing and will continue to flow to affected areas. I will limit my remarks on the U.S. relief effort to this statement since you will have the opportunity to hear more detailed and in-depth descriptions from USAID Acting Assistant Administrator Jose R. Cardenas and Rear Admiral Joseph Kernan, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command and Commander, U.S. Fourth Fleet.

While we continue to address the immediate needs of Haiti's people, the Administration is looking ahead simultaneously to determine the needs for the long-term reconstruction and rehabilitation in Haiti. We know that food security, already a concern before the storms, has become even more critical due to the extensive damage to Haiti's agricultural sector. Beyond that, Haiti's roads, bridges, airports, schools, and power grid have all been severely affected.

The starting point for development of a comprehensive plan to help Haiti is an accurate and comprehensive assessment of the damages and what will be needed to reverse them. This process is already underway, and involves the joint efforts of the U.S. and Haitian governments, the international donor community, the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti and other international relief agencies. Once

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we determine needs, we will consult with Haiti's government, as well as other major donors, international relief agencies, and multilateral institutions to ensure the quickest and most effective recovery effort.

Let me add that coordination among donors and partners in Haiti is ongoing with frequent contacts between ambassadors, representatives of international financial institutions and relief agencies, and the government in Haiti. Other consultative mechanisms also facilitate coordination of support for Haiti, such as the Haiti Key Players meeting, which will be chaired by Under Secretary for Political Affairs, William Burns, in New York on the margins of the UN General Assembly. President Preval will attend.

I would like to touch briefly on the current political situation in Haiti. After four months of political turmoil, the Haitian Parliament approved the government of Prime Minister Michelle Pierre-Louis on September 4, as the country felt the impact of Hurricane Gustav. PM Pierre-Louis and her government did not have a honeymoon period. They began work amidst a crisis that continues today. The support of Haiti's friends and partners will be invaluable to PM Michelle Pierre-Louis's government as it seeks to address the crisis caused by the storms and the very real needs that Haiti had prior to hurricane season. Economic development, good governance, democratic development, security, and humanitarian needs still must be addressed. Our Ambassador in Port au Prince as well as senior U.S. visitors, such as USAID Administrator and Director of Foreign Assistance Henrietta Fore, have already reached out to the Prime Minister to assure her of our support and commitment to Haiti.

I think I will stop here to allow Mr. Cardenas and Admiral Kernan to brief you. I look forward to answering your questions afterwards. Thank you.

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