

EUROPEAN COMMISSION



Humanitarian Aid

Letter from Haiti

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For the past two days, the city seems to have come out of its apathy and is organising itself. In addition to the international volunteers, more and more Haitian teams are on the streets, probably organised by mayors and neighbourhood committees. They are sweeping the roads and collecting rubbish.

Since the quake, everyone has been living outside, sometimes in appalling conditions, raising the risk of disease outbreaks. But the teams have been sweeping up and gathering rubble so that trucks can take away the waste. This type of action has a dual purpose: it gives Haitians an opportunity to earn a small salary thereby regaining some autonomy, as well as making the streets cleaner. It helps to re-launch the local economy with necessary and useful work for the community.

On some pavements, people are taking pride in the clean-up. Here and there you see makeshift signs in Creole: "Pa jeté fatra isi" (Don't drop litter!)

The bulldozers began work yesterday and are operating all around the city. In the government quarter they are clearing the mountains of rubble so that reconstruction work can begin. They expect to find many more bodies in the debris. This is tragically inevitable after so many multi-storey buildings collapsed completely. And it will make the clearing process even more difficult.

Heading for the port, we noticed that the city's main market had reopened. Street stalls and smaller markets had earlier led the way all across Port-au-Prince. Another hopeful sign that life may gradually be returning to "normal" - and that despite the incredible difficulties, the Haitians are not giving up.

Two weeks after the quake, little by little, the city is stirring again. Yesterday evening, at the camp installed near the entrance to the airport road, new tents were pitched: confirmation that a new distribution had taken place. The next mammoth challenge is to find shelter and re-house hundreds of thousands of people. Hopefully the rain will hold off until this task is completed.

For more information: http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index_en.htm

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