



National Institute of BUILDING SCIENCES

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May 24, 2010

Senator John Kerry
Chair, Committee on Foreign Relations
218 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Dick Lugar
Ranking Member, Committee on Foreign Relations
306 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Kerry and Ranking Member Lugar:

We commend you and your committee's leadership in responding to the devastating earthquake that occurred in Haiti earlier this year. Immediately following the report of the earthquake and the extensive destruction of the nation's infrastructure, representatives from the United States building community came together to provide support and expertise to the Haitian people.

The U.S. building community is developing a toolkit of best practices and resources through an open solicitation to its members. The National Institute of Building Sciences is coordinating the toolkit's formation. Participants in the toolkit effort are identifying resources and best practices for review and potential adoption by the Haitian government. This tool kit will include standards for rebuilding structures to resist seismic, wind, and flood forces as well as techniques for the application of such standards and construction practices to be used in the rebuilding process. All of these tools will be designed to work with the materials and resources available to Haiti.

While the lack of standards/codes and enforcement certainly comes into play, we cannot ignore the reality that the economic conditions of Haiti will undoubtedly make a difference in how construction is completed. The resources available through this effort will bring together the engineering, academic and construction fields and materials suppliers to create potential systems of construction that are economical yet provide the resistance to earthquakes and hurricanes needed in this tropical country.

The National Institute of Building Sciences and participants in the toolkit effort are working with key representatives from the disaster relief non-governmental organization (NGO) community and the U.S. government to assure that the toolkit is being presented to appropriate officials and entities engaged in the long-term redevelopment of Haiti.

Chairman Kerry and Ranking Member Lugar
Page 2
May 24, 2010

Many U.S. codes- and standards-development organizations are participating in the development of this tool kit. These organizations, along with the Institute's Building Seismic Safety Council and Multihazard Mitigation Council, are combining efforts to create this very important and useful toolkit. However, it will be a useless tool unless the United States requires it be followed when administering grants and funding applications during Haiti's reconstruction efforts. The alternative – funding reconstruction without mitigation requirements – could mean witnessing similar devastation from future catastrophic events.

As the Committee considers S.3317, "Haiti Empowerment, Assistance and Rebuilding Act of 2010," we ask that you look to the efforts currently being conducted by the U.S. building community and their utility in providing the Haitian people with tools and resources to rebuild in a sustainable, long-term manner.

Please do not hesitate to call upon the Institute for additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Henry L. Green". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "H" and "G".

Henry L. Green, Hon. AIA
President