

**PRESS RELEASE**

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## **President Bill Clinton Announces New Irish Initiative for Haiti**

### **World's First Haiti Week to take place in Ireland in January 2012**

#### **Irish NGOs and Business People Unite to Create Awareness and Raise Funds for Haiti**

**Dublin - October 9, 2011:** President Bill Clinton today announced the launch of '**Haiti Week**' an Irish-led global first in support of Haiti, which was stricken by a massive earthquake in 2010 killing one in forty of the population (over 230,000 people). **Haiti Week** which is the brainchild of Irish businessmen Leslie Buckley, Michael Carey and Ian Hyland, will take place in Ireland from January 21<sup>st</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup> 2012 promoting awareness and raising vital funds for the Caribbean country. It will focus attention on both the challenges and latent potential of the struggling country through showcasing the stories, plans and output of its people through the Haitian arts, music and business communities.

At the launch of **Haiti Week**, before an audience of 300 people in the Four Seasons Hotel this morning, President Bill Clinton praised the special influence that Ireland and the Irish people are having on the reconstruction of Haiti. He highlighted how Irish Government support allied to the work of Irish NGOs, social and business leaders, all backed by an army of over 1,000 Irish volunteers, has made Ireland one of the leading nations globally in the recovery and development of a country that has twice the population of Ireland but in an area roughly the size of Munster.

**Haiti Week** will feature a number of designated events throughout Ireland and be supported by a web-site ([www.haitiweek.org](http://www.haitiweek.org)) and social media campaign that will facilitate people who want to learn about and contribute to the redevelopment of the country. The first ever **Haiti Week** will culminate with the **Haiti Ball**, in the the **Four Seasons Hotel** on **January 27<sup>th</sup> 2012** where the recipient of the inaugural **Goodwill for Haiti Award** will be announced.

According to Leslie Buckley, "Our first ever **Haiti Week** will coincide with the second anniversary of the catastrophic earthquake which killed over 230,000 people which is more than the entire population of Cork city and suburbs. We want to highlight all that is amazing about Haiti and point to this proud country's plans for a better future while also reminding people of the ongoing struggles the Haitian people are facing on a daily basis. There are still 595,000 people living in tents and under tarpaulins; there is a constant fear of cholera which has affected over 400,000 and killed 6,000 people to date; and nearly half a million Haitian children are currently without a school to go to. Despite all these obstacles, I'm extremely proud to be part of an Irish community that is working to support new ideas and sustainable initiatives to help the people of Haiti."

Also speaking at the breakfast was Denis O'Brien who has been hugely instrumental in the rebuilding of Haiti. O'Brien personally funded the restoration of the Iron Market, Haiti's major marketplace and centre of commerce in Port-au-Prince. The market was the first building to be rebuilt in the wake of the earthquake. The Digicel Foundation, founded by Denis O'Brien in 2007, supports the education of 20,000 students in primary schools throughout Haiti.

Michael Carey, businessman and founder of Soul of Haiti, added “We have to provide not just a short-term humanitarian response but also a longer term sustainable economic solution. Haiti is a country of great need but also fantastic opportunity. It is essential that, during Haiti week, we showcase the great business opportunities that exist in this country. We need to change people’s attitudes toward Haiti and to make a compelling investment case.”

More details about Haiti Week will be made public in the near future.

For more information on Haiti week or if your organisation would like to get involved please see [www.haitiweek.org](http://www.haitiweek.org)

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**About Haiti:**

Haiti is the second largest Caribbean Island, situated 77km southeast of Cuba. Haiti occupies the western third of the island it shares with the Dominican Republic and has a population of 8.5million.

Before the catastrophic earthquake in 2010, 54% of Haitians lived on less than \$1 a day and life expectancy was 52 years of age. Infant mortality was 76 per 1,000 live births and nearly 20% of children under the age of five suffered from child malnutrition.

Since the earthquake, these figures have not been revised. The earthquake killed over 230,000 and displaced 2.1 million people. On the last count 595,000 Haitians were still living in IDP (Internally Displaced Persons) camps in tents and under tarps. A fatal outbreak of cholera in October last year killed a further 6,000 and affected 400,000 people.

**About Haven:**

Haven was set up by Irish businessman, Leslie Buckley and his wife, Carmel Buckley, in January 2009. The NGO is working solely in Haiti, building houses and sustainable communities, while providing emergency relief in the wake of the earthquake. By the end of the year Haven will have built, repaired and upgraded 3,000 homes in Haiti and has a target of completing 10,000 homes by 2014. Haven has also provided sanitation and community facilities and training to thousands of local Haitians and continue to do so. For more information see [www.havenpartnership.com](http://www.havenpartnership.com)

**About Soul of Haiti:**

The Soul of Haiti Foundation was established by a group of entrepreneurs and finalists of the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year in 2007. Soul of Haiti's mission is to empower Haitian communities to create success through relationships with a community of Irish entrepreneurs and has three key areas of focus: 1/ Support for Development of Enterprise Culture: ‘Brand Haiti’, ‘Haiti Invest’ : Investment Office, Haitian Internship program in Entrepreneurship; 2/Support Trade and Investment: Partnership for Peace & Prosperity in St Martin, Investments in tree nurseries/agriculture and modular building projects and; 3/Support for Selected Not-for-Profit Initiatives: in Ile a Vache (orphanage), Christine Valley (agriculture, model farm) and Abacou (fishing village and enterprise centre). For more information see [www.soulofhaiti.or](http://www.soulofhaiti.or)