May 2, 2008

Business Community Open Letter to Congress on Economic and Trade Assistance to Haiti

On behalf of the U.S. business community, we applaud the efforts of Congress to include incentives for improved economic conditions in Haiti in the Farm Bill package. Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, and it is a moral imperative that the United States assist Haiti in its time of need. Both the economic and foreign policy interests of the United States will benefit from the extension of trade preferences and increased development assistance to Haiti.

A program centered on trade, development, security and humanitarian support is crucial to help Haiti advance and remain an effective partner of the United States in the Caribbean. Predictable solutions and a long-term commitment are essential in the design of that program.

While the trade provisions in the Farm Bill are not a panacea, Haitians will clearly benefit from an expansion of legitimate commerce under enhanced trade preferences. Export-related jobs in Haiti pay above-average wages and allow workers to enter the formal sector. By providing local citizens with alternatives to illegal emigration and narcotics trafficking, enhanced trade preferences may serve as an effective alternative development program.

American Apparel & Footwear Association Business Roundtable Coalition of Service Industries Emergency Committee for American Trade National Association of Manufacturers National Foreign Trade Council National Retail Federation Retail Industry Leaders Association U.S. Chamber of Commerce

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