



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **The Haitian Diaspora in Haiti's Economic Development**

**ARLINGTON, Va.** — Some 100 individuals representing community groups, various governments and international organizations exchanged ideas on the potential of Haitians abroad to contribute to Haiti's development at the IAF's second conference on remittances held June 20-21 in Port au Prince, Haiti.

Joining the IAF in co-sponsorship of "The Haitian Diaspora: An Indispensable Partner in Haiti's Economic Development" were the Center for Free Enterprise and Democracy, an NGO founded by 20 Haitian businessmen; USAID; and UNITRANSFER, a division of Haiti's largest bank, UNIBANK, S.A. The conference received extensive media coverage, including on the front page of Haiti's principal newspaper *Le Nouvelliste* and on television news.

Carlo Dade, IAF representative for Haiti and the Dominican Republic and a conference organizer, moderated a panel of Mexicans and Salvadorans experienced in the formation of partnerships to channel remittances to

development projects: Roberto Ramírez, head of the IAF's Mexican grantee APOYO; Blanca Cruz and Blanca Romero of Washington's Comunidades Unidas Salvadoreñas; and Mario Riestra, director of the Mexican National Coordinating Office for State Offices on Migrants. Mexicans and Salvadorans have taken the lead in contributing, through both government and nongovernmental channels, to home country development and offer successful examples to follow. Panelist René A. León, El Salvador's ambassador to the United States, discussed the similarities between his country and Haiti, including their recent turmoil and their significant overseas communities.

Other topics covered included the market for Haitian products abroad, the role of international and bilateral organizations in the use of remittances, and the work of U.S.-based Haitian groups. Representatives of Haitian diaspora groups in attendance included Dina Paul Parks, executive director of the National Coalition for Haitian Rights; Marie-Carolle Tertullien, coordinator of the Federation of Haitian Regional Associations in the Exterior; and Joe Baptiste, a founding member of the largest Haitian-American organization, National Organization for the Advancement of Haitians. Donald Terry, head of the IDB's Multi-Lateral Investment Fund, opened the conference. Ambassador León, Leslie Voltaire, the Haitian minister for the diaspora, and Manuel Orozco, director of the Inter-American Dialogue's Central America program, delivered keynote addresses. Margarita Mooney and Ronel Ceran, consultants to the IAF, spoke on their studies of the Haitian diaspora.

On the concluding panel, Carlo Dade enumerated the ways in which the IAF can back initiatives promoting collaboration on development projects between migrant groups and members of their home communities. Created by Congress in 1969 to help improve conditions for the poor in Latin America and the Caribbean, the IAF has awarded more than 4,300 grants to self-help projects over the past three decades. Since 1986, it has pioneered efforts to involve communities abroad in the development of the region.

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