

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS
ON THE FCC RESPONSE TO THE EARTHQUAKE IN HAITI
February 18, 2010**

The scenes of devastation coming out of Haiti after last month's earthquake cried out for action like few events in history. I just want to say how proud I am at the way our FCC team responded to that call. Many opened up their hearts and wallets to help—others gave their time and expertise to help—and a few even risked their own safety to travel to Haiti on behalf of the FCC to help. I am extraordinarily proud of them, the team that deployed to Haiti and everyone here in the International, Public Safety and Enforcement Bureaus and elsewhere who worked around the clock to address the communications needs of the people of Haiti. And we owe a huge debt of gratitude to the Chairman and his staff for ensuring that this challenge was taken up right and executed so well.

I want to commend Mindel De La Torre for her leadership of the FCC Haiti Response Team—here and in Port-au-Prince. She did an absolutely outstanding job every step of the way—and she continues to do that. I also want personally to thank each of the seven FCC staff who traveled to Haiti in the wake of the earthquake to assess Haiti's communication infrastructure and services. The reports and photographs sent back showed clearly the extent of the destruction and the need for an ongoing and long-term FCC commitment to assist its sister agency in Haiti, Conatel. What we have done so far has been significant—but the task of reconstructing Haiti will go on for years—not a hundred-yard dash, but a long, hard contest of endurance that will demand our active involvement for a very long time. We will stand with our brothers and sisters in Haiti as their communications infrastructure—and just about everything else in the country—gets put back together.

The experience with Haiti shows what inter-agency coordination done right can accomplish. The FCC brought its communications expertise to bear to help with the recovery under the auspices of the U.S. Agency for International Development and in coordination with the State Department, the National Communications System (NCS) at the Department of Homeland Security, the Office of Science and Technology Policy, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, the Department of Energy and the U.S. Southern Command, to name just a few.

I also want to thank a current and a former member of my own staff for the assistance they provided with the recovery efforts. First, at the request of Chairman Genachowski, I was pleased to loan John Giusti, my chief of staff, to oversee the agency's Haiti Response Team during Mindel De La Torre's time on the ground in Haiti. As the former head of the FCC's International Bureau, and an expert on inter-agency and international coordination, John proved invaluable in facilitating the FCC response to requests from the U.S. and Haitian governments related to communications infrastructure in and around Port-au-Prince.

Second, Paul Margie, an advisor in my office from 2001 to 2005, serves as the U.S. representative for Télécoms Sans Frontières. He deployed to Haiti shortly after the earthquake to assist the TSF team in bringing secure communications to aid agencies and to establish call

centers to reconnect families. They got there early and played a vital role in beginning to reconnect Haitians to one another and to the rest of the world. As Paul so succinctly put it, “Telecom is not a luxury in emergency response. It’s core to the mission.” I congratulate Paul, and many others from the non-government sector, for the outstanding work they are doing.

The FCC has a proud history of responding to meet communications needs in times of disaster. More than four years ago, I saw first-hand the impact that Hurricane Katrina had on our communications infrastructure along the Gulf Coast. Under the leadership of Chairman Kevin Martin, the FCC led an impressive response in getting communications infrastructure back-up-and-running. If events like the earthquake in Haiti or Hurricane Katrina or whatever the next disaster may be are about anything other than nature’s wrath, they are about the importance of communications. Communications, or the lack thereof, between those stranded or homeless to loved ones; communications, or the lack thereof, among emergency responders and relief agencies; communications, or the lack thereof, between governments and government agencies; and communications, or the lack thereof, by the media to viewers and listeners in the affected area and around the globe.

I often talk about public-private partnering as the answer to so many of the challenges our country, our globe, confront. That applies so clearly amidst this kind of destruction. On the Gulf Coast, and now in Haiti, too, we come together and pull together for common human objectives. We work in close partnership with industry—wireless and wireline companies, satellite operators, broadcasters, Internet service providers, equipment suppliers. We see company leaders who spend much of their regular time competing against one another pushing their competitive instincts aside and working in a spirit of mutual cooperation. It’s a wonderful thing to see. And it’s a wonderful way to tackle a lot of other problems, too.