

Republic of Haiti

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Climate Change and the Right to Food

Submitted By:

Church World Service (CWS) is a global humanitarian organisation supported by ecumenical churches in the United States. The vision of CWS is to fight hunger and poverty and to promote peace and justice. CWS has been involved in Haiti since 1946. All programs and projects are implemented in partnership with local organisations. Priorities of CWS in Haiti are food security and community development, with a child protection lens, while also intervening in construction of houses and advocating for the right to dignified housing as well as the right to food. Based in New York city, CWS has had consultative status with ECOSOC since 1974. The CWS Country Representative in Haiti is Margot de Greef: MDeGreef@cwsglobal.org. **Church World Service – Haiti**, 8 Impasse Perpillant Rue Roger Colas, Route de Frères, Pétion-Ville, T : + 509 36917902



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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The food crisis in Haiti, socio economic in origin and exacerbated by climate change, constitutes a violation of the right to food. In early 2016, it was estimated by the World Food Programme and the Government of Haiti that 3.6 million were food insecure and 1.5 million severely so. This represented more than 1,000,000 households, 1/3 of the 10.8 million population².

2. Haiti's ability to feed its own people has been undermined by decades of underinvestment in agricultural development, poor infrastructure, poor natural resource management, political instability and acute deforestation. Climate change has increased its vulnerability to storms, hurricanes and droughts, aggravating environmental degradation and causing significant crop losses³.

3. Government of Haiti policies on food security and climate change mitigation and adaptation have been sporadic, partial and uncoordinated, lacking in scale to address food insecurity at national level. Import subsidies have been prioritized over food production. As result, the vast majority of Haitian people, including farmers, have been insufficiently resourced, equipped and supported to face climactic challenges and ensure a steady supply of locally grown food.

4. The attention of Haitian parliament has itself been diverted by the long overdue elections and political instability. Since January 2015, the Executive Branch has ruled without any parliamentary oversight.

II. HAITIAN AND INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

5. The right to food is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, recognized as the right of all persons to "adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food"⁴.

6. Haiti ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) on October 8, 2013. ICESCR recognizes the "right to adequate standard of living" and the "fundamental right to be free from hunger". ICESCR defines the right to food in terms of "*availability*" of food either through production from natural resources, production via agriculture, fishing or hunting or sales; "*accessibility*" whereby physical and economic access to food is ensured; "*adequacy*" whereby food must satisfy the nutritional requirements of men, women, girls and boys taking into account age, gender, living conditions, etc⁵. The right to food presupposes an individual's right to feed him/herself in dignity through his/her own efforts and natural resources; it is to be distinguished from the right to simply be fed⁶.

7. The Haitian Constitution explicitly guarantees the right to food "[t]he State recognizes the right of every citizen to decent housing, education, food and social security"⁷.

8. The Government accepted the Paris Agreement signed by 198 countries in Paris, France in December 2015. It is the first country in the region to integrate environment and climate change in its migration policy and to mainstream migration into its position on climate change negotiations⁸.

III. THE CURRENT FOOD CRISIS

9. In the 1980's Haiti was 80% self sufficient in food and fully self sufficient in rice, its main staple⁹. Today, it produces less than 40% of what it consumes¹⁰. In 2011, Haiti spent more than US\$800 million per year in subsidized food imports whose cost is often prohibitive for 80% of the Haitian population that lives on less than \$2.00 a day¹¹. The cost of imported rice is often cheaper than the locally produced variety. Basic food items have increased in price as the value of the Haitian gourde has gone down, causing a 7% increase in the price of food basket¹². In 2015, food purchase represented more than 65% of domestic expenditure for more than half of Haitian households.¹³ Meanwhile, less than 4% of the Haitian budget is dedicated to agricultural development, on which more than 60% of its population depends. Misplaced policy, insufficient investment in agriculture and political will, combined with a failure to adequately prepare for climate change, have created the worst food crisis in the Western Hemisphere today.¹⁴

10. Climate change has reduced the ability of Haitians to produce their own food. Now in its third year of drought, Haiti experienced widespread crop failure in 2015¹⁵. In Spring 2015, 81% of households nationally reported spring and summer losses. Of those affected, 72% reported having lost more than 80% of their production¹⁶. Rural households also lost income generated from their employment as seasonal laborers; these combined forces reduced their purchasing power and caused many to accumulate debt¹⁷.

11. The Lower North West Department in particular has experienced acute drought since 2010; this area registers 20% higher food insecurity than the national average¹⁸. In 2015, cattle died in large numbers due to lack of water¹⁹. Nationally, an estimated 67% of rural households have not planted for either Spring or Winter 2016 and have poor chances of recovery until the early 2017²⁰. The CNSA and the World Food Programme in Haiti consider it necessary to continue providing emergency assistance to enable families to sustain themselves until the next harvest²¹.

IV. HAITI'S VULNERABILITY TO CLIMATE CHANGE

12. The Global Climate Change Vulnerability Index characterizes Haiti's vulnerability to climate change as extreme, ranking it 6th most at risk out of 198 countries²².

13. Climate Change will also increase Haiti's vulnerability to rising sea levels, higher sea temperatures, flooding, soil and beach erosion; invasion by non - native species, salinization of aquifers and freshwater estuaries. Haiti is at risk of an increase in the intensity, frequency and duration of hurricanes.²³ Climate change also has worsened the impact of the cyclical El Niño, leading to a severe reduction in rainfall²⁴. 2015 was 1.6°C warmer than the previous warmest year. Drought caused by climate change has also exacerbated poor access to water along the Dominico-Haitian border²⁵.

14. Haiti's forest cover has now shrunk to 2%²⁶. This has increased soil erosion and increased the incidence of flooding, loss of arable soil.

15. Environmental degradation has increased the link between natural disasters, loss of life and food insecurity. In 2004, 3,000 people perished near the Dominico-Haitian border following heavy flooding. Later that year, 800 more died and 1,000 disappeared as a result of Tropical Storm Jeanne²⁷. In late October 2012, heavy rains, strong winds, and flooding associated with Hurricane Sandy resulted in the death of 54 people and damaged or destroyed tens of thousands of houses and additional infrastructure, such as roads and bridges. Post-storm assessments indicated that the hurricane destroyed more than 90,000 hectares of crops, compounding harvest losses sustained during Tropical Storm Isaac in August 2012 and drought conditions earlier in the year²⁸.

16. GOH administers a flood early warning system but real-time data is insufficient, limiting its usefulness. In case of a flood, there are few accessible and adequate shelters located on high ground²⁹.

V. GOVERNMENT OF HAITI EFFORTS TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE AND FOOD SECURITY

V.i Insufficient scaling up of efforts to meet food crisis

17. The Government of Haiti acknowledges climate change as threat multiplier. It has taken some positive measures to increase capacity for adaptation. The Ministry of Agriculture has supported programs to introduce farmers to new, drought resistant crops such as root crops and introduction of new vegetables. It is taking steps to promote more resilient varieties and diversification of crop selection so that farmers have a greater variety of crops to withstand changing rainfall and temperature patterns³⁰. The National Coordination of Food Security has encouraged small farmers to experiment with new crop varieties, move out of monocrop production so as to reduce the chance of total crop failure³¹. However, these interventions have not been scaled up sufficiently to address the scale and urgency of Haiti's current food crisis, and have not been backed by sufficient resources³².

Vii Gaps between Ministerial request and Government spending

18. Between 2000 and 2005, the Haitian government devoted just 4 % of its budgetary expenditures to agriculture, even though the sector employs more than half the workforce and accounts for a quarter of national income³³. In 2011, the Haitian government listed food security as one of the chief priorities. However, indicators of the country's food insecurity actually decreased since that time³⁴.

19. In 2015, the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Rural Development (MARNDR), prioritized agriculture and natural resource management with projects designed for watershed and seed bank management and food production. It requested \$198 million of the 2015-2016 budget to support this work. The Ministry of Economy and Finance responded that the country's finances could not support such a request³⁵.

20. During the same period, the Ministry of the Environment estimated that the cumulative costs of climate disruption for the Haitian economy could rise to US\$1.8 billion, unless preventative adaptation measures are undertaken³⁶.

21. The Government of Haiti planned to allocate the largest portion of capital spending in 2015-2016 to investments in agricultural infrastructure and the construction sector to support growth. It aimed to capitalize this through external funding. However, following a 20% reduction of donations

and loans, it called on all citizens and businesses to civic responsibility to fulfill their tax charges to generate revenue. This did not generate the capital needed either.³⁷

Viii. Investments in food security are incommensurate with Government's rhetoric.

22. In 2013, former President Martelly declared the "Year of the Environment" but allocated only US\$42.4 million - or 1.5% - of the total national budget for 2013/2014. Cuts to the budget of the Ministry of the Environment resulted in failure to enforce laws on deforestation³⁸.

23. Promises were also made by Martelly to make Haiti food self-sufficient within three years, but these remained unmatched by budgetary allocations. Instead, budgets for the Ministry of Agriculture were slashed from US\$226.4 million in 2012 to a proposed US\$164.7 million in 2013³⁹. In that year, the Ministries of the Economy and Finance and of Justice/Public Safety doubled their budget while the Ministries of Agriculture, Education and Public Health were reduced.⁴⁰

24. Despite this systemic underinvestment, in their 2011 UPR, the Government attributed their failures to address food insecurity to a variety of extraneous factors including structural weaknesses of the agricultural sector in terms of production, storage and distribution, recurring natural disasters, lack of credit for agricultural production and constant population growth⁴¹.

Viv: Food insecurity leads to socio-political tensions

25. Government failure to increase access to and availability of food, as well as neglect by urban based legislators of the extreme vulnerability of rural communities, has weakened public trust in government institutions and increased social conflict. In April 2008, popular protests against the government handling of the ramifications of spike in the price of rice, led to the resignation of the then Prime Minister, Jacques Edouard Alexis. This situation was aggravated after 4 successive hurricanes killed 800 people and wiped out 60% of the country's harvest⁴².

26. In 2012, drought caused losses of between 42-60% of food production, while hurricanes and flooding eradicated crops and farms in northern departments, damaging infrastructure and livestock, and generating losses in excess of \$250m (£159m). In late 2012 the FAO warned that rising food insecurity could increase social tensions⁴³. The cost of food increased for Haiti's poorest, thousands of whom were still recovering from the January 2010 earthquake. By February 2013, the number of Haitians living with chronic malnutrition had increased from 800,000 to 1.52 million people, compared to 2011⁴⁴.

27. The current prevailing political instability and a prolonged electoral process does not exonerate the Government of its responsibility to ensure that its population is food secure. The Government of Haiti should also take immediate steps to restore public confidence that it can address the food crisis, the underlying environmental degradation and prepare for the future implications of a changing climate.

Vv: State obligations to vulnerable groups and to addressing emergencies

28. The right to food obliges the Haitian state to "overcome hunger and malnutrition and realize food security for all, including during emergencies"⁴⁵. In the aftermath of natural disasters, food insecurity increases, particularly for vulnerable groups. Following the January 2010 earthquake many women and girls in Port-au-Prince were forced to exchange sex for food and water⁴⁶.

29. The specific nutritional and dietary needs of vulnerable groups have been insufficiently addressed in the Government's policy interventions. Five percent and 65% of Haitian children suffer acute malnutrition and anemia respectively; nearly 50% of women of reproductive age are also anemic⁴⁷.

30. Urban food insecurity persists. Approximately 3.5 million people live in Port-au-Prince, the vast majority in substandard and overcrowded housing. Poor sanitary facilities, cholera, absence of water and of cultivable farmlands adjoining urban dwellings combine to make urban agriculture extremely difficult, if not virtually impossible⁴⁸.

Vvi. Civil Society Organizations make up for gaps in food and climate policy

31. Multiple attempts at reforestation have failed because the chopping of trees for wood charcoal remains an important source of income for impoverished rural communities. For every 60 million trees planted, poor Haitians fell up to 20,000.⁴⁹ As a result, civil society organizations, backed by international donors, have mounted ambitious public education programs in rural areas on the importance of forest protection⁵⁰.

32. The Haitian Civil Society Climate Change Platforms reports that many farmers have participated in training workshops all over Haiti; farmers better understand the impacts of climate change and have adapted their cultivating and harvesting calendars according to shifting climatic patterns⁵¹. However, the absence of alternative livelihoods still forces people to cut trees for charcoal⁵². In spite of the intersectionality of poverty, deforestation and aggravated vulnerability to climate change, the Government has failed to prioritize renewable energy models as alternatives to charcoal, which still constitutes more than 60% of the energy used domestically in Haiti⁵³.

Vvii. Binational and international negotiations on climate change

33. The Governments of Haiti and the Dominican Republic have taken steps, through the Mixed Bilateral Commission, to cooperate on border security and cross border transportation⁵⁴. However, the impact of drought and food scarcity has not yet been addressed by them as specific binational issue. Governments have not yet scaled up joint border management efforts to meet the US\$136 million investment estimated to be necessary to prevent social and political tensions, including violence and hunger in that region⁵⁵. Despite their mutually interdependent economies and ecosystems, neither the INDC of Haiti nor of the Dominican Republic that were presented to the UNFCCC mentions the respective neighbouring country. Tensions between both countries erupted following the September 23rd 2013 Constitutional Court ruling which stripped Dominican nationality of Dominican born children of migrant Haitians, negatively affecting bilateral relations including at the level of the OAS⁵⁶. In the absence of state led coordination, civil society and international organizations now invest in cross border farmers' exchanges and climate change awareness raising⁵⁷

34. In June 2015, 36,000 Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent crossed the border into Haiti⁵⁸. IDP settlements of Dominicans and returned migrant Haitian workers emerged, registering 2,203 in one camp alone⁵⁹. In September 2015, the Independent Expert on Human Rights in Haiti appealed to the Government of Haiti to urgently make supplies of food and water available to these communities⁶⁰. At the time of writing, Governments of Haiti and the Dominican Republic were yet to coordinate efforts to address either food insecurity or drought.

35. As a member of CARICOM and AOSIS - the Alliance of Small Island States – the Government has aligned itself to the climate justice negotiating strategies of other highly affected and at risk countries. These negotiating blocks justifiably have called on wealthy countries to fund adaptation and mitigation strategies. The Government’s INDC correctly highlights the need for higher climate investments including for integrated water resources management and watershed; integrated coastal zone management and rehabilitation of infrastructure; the preservation and strengthening of food security including through development of the bioeconomy; and energy transition to reduce dependence on fossil fuels; information, education and awareness⁶¹. However, the Government’s request of US\$23.39 billion in external aid from the GCF constitutes almost one quarter of the latter’s global budget of \$100 billion, destined for all the Least Developed Countries, Small Island States and Sub-Saharan countries combined. Such high, unrealistic bids emphasize the Government’s overdependence on external aid as a source of funding for its climate change adaptation. The Government has also pledged to cut emissions by 31% by 2030 even though its share of global greenhouses gases is merely 0.03%.⁶²

VI. GOVERNMENT OF HAITI POLICIES TO ADDRESS FOOD INSECURITY

VI i. Structural obstacles faced by Haiti’s farming sector

36. The Government of Haiti is legally bound by the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to create an enabling environment in which Haitians can produce enough food to feed themselves and their families.⁶³ For successive generations, however, it has implemented piecemeal policies whose outputs have undermined, rather than assisted, the agricultural sector to safeguard this right.

37. Sixty percent of Haiti’s population is rural and two thirds is dependent on agriculture; women constitute the majority and are involved in all aspects of agricultural processes. High levels of illiteracy rates, low social standing and entrenched social norms prevent them from being fully involved in agricultural development⁶⁴. Women seldom own or control land use, experience difficulty in obtaining legal titles, and farm marginal lands often belonging to their male relatives. They lack access to agricultural credit or opportunities to transition to other productive economic sectors. In recent years, drought has reduced their income.

38. The important role of women in food production and their relative disempowerment in rural policy making make them a priority group for any national level policy aimed at mitigating the effects of climate change. The Government has taken steps by “introducing gender aspects to government project to reinforce the capacity of women... and their participation in development projects”.⁶⁵ Yet rural women still remain insufficiently informed, consulted or included in the design of agrarian policies. They are not included in policy making and decisions on disaster risk reduction, or preparedness related to climate change⁶⁶.

39. Working on small plots of land, Haitian farmers lack the credit needed to increase agricultural yields. Most commercial banks are concentrated in the capital Port-au-Prince. In 2008, the average loan size was \$12,700, equivalent to 20 times the country’s GDP per capita and out of reach for the majority of rurally based poor farmers who subsist on less than \$2.00 per day⁶⁷. NGOs, cooperatives and microfinance associations fill in gaps created by the virtual absence of the financial sector. The

insecurity of land tenure creates reluctance to invest, contributes to violent social conflicts and contributes to environmental degradation. Calls by Haitian Peasant Farming Associations for agrarian reform have been met with resistance by the State, and at times direct repression⁶⁸. In recognition of the growing environmental degradation and food security issues, the Government established the National Institute of Agrarian Reform (INARA) in 1995 to handle land rights issues. Unfortunately, INARA has been relatively ineffective in strengthening land ownership rights⁶⁹.

VI ii. Donor support to Government projects fail to increase long term food security

40. The Government of Haiti has often privileged sporadic, short term, often charitable projects, whose outcomes have neither increased agricultural productivity nor the resilience of food insecure sectors. In 2012, President Martelly launched ABA Grangou, a national strategic framework to halve the proportion of people suffering from hunger by the end of 2016 and eradicate hunger and malnutrition by 2025⁷⁰. Between 2012 and 2014, up to US\$30 million received for ABA Grangou from Venezuelan government run Petrocaribe funds were channeled through private foundations. The state run Commission for the Fight Against Hunger and Malnutrition (COLFAM), which had overarching responsibility for the project throughout that time, received no funding⁷¹. Funding originally targeted to strengthen long term safety nets and agricultural investments were instead given to immediate relief and emergency assistance. ABA Grangou supplied cash transfers to 60,000 mothers to help keep their children in school, distributed 500,000 food kits after Hurricane Sandy, and 45,000 seed kits to replenish damaged crops, but failed to establish long term solutions to food insecurity⁷². ABA Grangou expired in 2014.

41. Between 1979 and 1995, policies implemented by the Haitian government, at the behest of its international donors, debilitated the environment in which Haitians were attempting to safeguard their right to food. In 1979, Haiti was reportedly at risk of being affected by an outbreak of African swine fever. International donors pushed for the eradication of the Haitian Creole pig, a local breed on which up to 80% of the rural population depended. All Haitian pigs were slaughtered. Thousands of farmers lost their main asset and became vulnerable to minor shocks⁷³. Uncompensated peasant farmers began cutting down trees and selling wood for charcoal as an alternative source of income. Trade liberalization then followed, presented as a precondition for Haiti to receive international aid. Haiti's per capita GDP and per capita agricultural production declined. Agricultural production fell and private investment shifted towards manufacturing⁷⁴. In 1995, tariffs were slashed from 35% to 3%. A flood of less expensive US rice poured in, undercutting Haitian farmers and further devastating rural communities⁷⁵. Former US President Clinton, recognizing failures, stated that, *“Since 1981, the United States has followed a policy.. ..that we rich countries that produce a lot of food should sell it to poor countries and relieve them of the burden of producing their own food... but it has not worked. It was a mistake.”* In spite of this, trade liberalization policies have not been reversed and continue to hinder local attempts at food security.

42. The Government, with backing from external donors, has implemented numerous projects to address food insecurity. However, these have often yielded inconclusive results. In June 2009, USAID's Feed the Future West invested \$ 93.5 million to help farmers achieve higher profits and yields for some crops in the Port-au-Prince and St. Marc corridors. In 2013, the USAID also started 4 year programs to reach over 300,000 households. Feed the Future West and Feed the Future North has allocated \$498.2 million to 17 non infrastructure food security sector activities. Feed the Future North invested \$87.8 million in April 2013, to enhance agricultural productivity in the Cap Haitien corridor by supporting the cultivation of cacao, rice and other crops. Important performance targets were met, including farmer's use of new technologies or management practices, and the number of watershed

management associations formed. However, USAID and Government of Haiti officials reported challenges including two seasons of severe drought, difficulty in finding staff with necessary expertise, and delays in evaluations required to start irrigation system repair⁷⁶.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

- a) The Government should invest in infrastructure and roads that will facilitate access to markets.
- b) The Government should prioritize adequate access to food for vulnerable groups such as IDPs, rural populations, women and children. It should also plan for the disproportionately negative ramifications of decreased food supply for women and girls in all aspects of its national planning, and across all its ministries.
- c) The Government should prioritize and mainstream programs that build sustainable, alternative and resilient livelihoods, and promote disaster risk reduction and disaster preparedness. Climate change adaptation and mitigation should be integrated into all components of national planning and development projects.
- d) The Government should prioritize investments in low carbon, renewable and diverse energy models in order to transition from wood charcoal and fossil fuels and deliver clean energy across the country.
- e) The Government should allocate greater resources to the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of the Environment, so as to increase their agricultural extension support to farming communities in parts of rural Haiti most affected by drought. Budgetary allocations targeted at increasing national agricultural productivity, food production, transportation and distribution should be prioritized and maintained.
- f) The Government should lead initiatives to formalize land rights and should reduce the barriers to accessing agricultural credit for rural farmers, particularly women.
- g) Government should work to build the long term, operational and programmatic capacity of all ministries working with women's groups and farmers' associations, and include technical support, skills training and outreach programs to educate all farmers, including women, about the climate change.
- h) The Government should create permanent forums for communicating with Haitian Civil Society Organizations about food security, disaster risk reduction, preparedness and mitigation policies; it should establish time frames, benchmarks as well as mechanisms for community consultation and participation.

¹ "This communication does not purport to represent the institutional views, if any of NYU."

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- ² Haiti Emergency Food Security Assessment, Haitian National Coordination for Food Security and World Food Programme; December 2015
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- ⁴ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25
- ⁵ The Right to Adequate Food: UN Human Rights Fact Sheet 34; <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FactSheet34en.pdf>
- ⁶ The Right to Adequate Food: UN Human Rights Fact Sheet 34; <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FactSheet34en.pdf>
- ⁷ Constitution of the Republic of Haiti March 10, 1987 art. 22 (Haiti),.
- ⁸ IOM (2015) Haiti, Dominican Republic Address Migration, Environment and Climate Change Policy. July 10, 2015
- ⁹ World Bank. (2014) Living Conditions in Haiti's Capital Improve, but Rural Communities Remain Very Poor. July 11, 2014.
- ¹⁰ ibid
- ¹¹ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-ax740e.pdf>
- ¹² Bref Aperçu de la Situation Agricole et de la Sécurité Alimentaire ; Ministère de L'Agriculture des Ressources Naturelles et du Développement Rurale ; 2016
- ¹³ <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Haiti%20Emergency%20Food%20Security%20Assessment%20February%202016.pdf>
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- ²³ <http://nca2014.globalchange.gov/report/our-changing-climate/changes-hurricanes>
- ²⁴ Cai et al, 2015: ENSO and greenhouse warming, *Nature*, August 17, 2015, DOI: 10.1038/NCLIMATE2743
- ²⁵ Haitian Migrants returning from the Dominican Republic faced with drought, poverty and lack of opportunities: <http://haiti.iom.int/haitian-migrants-returning-dominican-republic-faced-drought-poverty-and-lack-opportunities->
- ²⁶ "There is a Forest in Haiti": Christian Aid; <http://www.christianaid.org.uk/resources/churches/reflections/there-is-a-forest-in-Haiti.aspx>
- ²⁷ <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/haiti-floods-due-to-deforestation/>
- ²⁸ Hurricane Sandy Factsheet:USAID <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/02.15.13%20-%20Haiti%20Hurricane%20Sandy%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>

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- ⁴⁰ Ibid
- ⁴¹ OHCHR Haiti National UPR Report: Right to Food (2011) July 19
- ⁴² <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/nov/08/haiti-hurricanes>
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- ⁵⁰ Ibid
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- ⁵⁵ http://postconflict.unep.ch/publications/UNEP_Haiti-DomRep_border_zone_EN.pdf
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