**PRESS AVAIL OPENING REMARKS**

**LES CAYES, SUD APRIL 6, 2017**

**SIX-MONTH ANNIVERSARY OF HURRICANE MATTHEW**

**CHARGE D’AFFAIRES BRIAN SHUKAN**

I am very pleased to be here today to express on behalf of the U.S. government and the American people, our continued assistance to the efforts by the people of the greater south as they continue to recover from the devastation caused by hurricane Matthew six months ago.

To date, the United States has provided over $100 million dollars to emergency response and ongoing recovery efforts. This includes $11 million from the U.S. military and $90 million from the U.S. Agency for International Development known as USAID.

Our assistance is spread across Sud, grand Anse and Nippes through over 20 local partner organizations and UN agencies including WFP, UNICEF, and IOM. We coordinate closely with other donors, local officials, and community leaders to target this assistance to where there the need is greatest.

Earlier today, I visited teachers and students at this very school--one of 50 that our funding helped refurbish and reopen so that children could receive protection and continue their studies.

From Les Cayes to Coteaux, I visited communities where U.S. assistance is enabling people to help themselves. I was inspired to see how neighbors were helping each other to repair their homes. With training and advice from carpenters, I saw how the build back safer initiative will make 6,000 houses stronger than before.

I saw farmers clearing and replanting fields with improved seeds. We are distributing 1,000 tons of improved maize seeds and 12,000 farmers are receiving high yield black bean and pigeon pea seeds. 18,000 farming households are receiving vouchers to purchase seeds on the local market. To get through the lean season from now through June, we are also providing monetary support to 32,000 at risk households.

We have also provided cash assistance to over 100,000 families to allow them to meet their basic needs and help re-stimulate local markets.

I am proud that support from the United States is enabling people to receive medical attention at 14 health clinics and from multiple mobile health clinics.

Aid from the U.S. is also supporting the rehabilitation of 50 water networks, piping and communal wells that will increase access to safe water.

And we have technical advisors working side-by-side with local and central government authorities to prepare for and strengthen the response to future weather events.

In sum, our objective today is to continue to address immediate needs, speed recovery efforts and strengthen the capacity of communities to better withstand storms to come.

We were here during the hurricane and we will continue to work with you towards not only recovery, but also resiliency, so to reduce the severity of future risks to your lives and livelihoods. We share your aspirations for lasting progress and peace.

KENBE LA! (hold fast and strong)