

Louis Michel inaugurates humanitarian office in Haiti and supports the country's development efforts

Louis Michel, European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, is on a two-day visit to Haiti. He began this morning by inaugurating the European Commission's new humanitarian office in Port-au-Prince before going on to meet the Prime Minister and to address the Haitian Parliament. Tomorrow he will officially open the works for the upgrading of the highway between Mirebalais and Hinche, in the centre of the country.

This is Louis Michel's third visit to Haiti since 2005, during which he will reiterate the EU's solidarity with the Haitian people and see at first hand the progress made in the projects financed by the European Development Fund (EDF).

On his arrival at Port-au-Prince, Commissioner Michel said: "Europe has an important commitment to Haiti that takes account of all aspects of the country's difficult situation. We wish to show our sustained support for the most vulnerable sections of the population by setting up a humanitarian aid office, while reaffirming our support for the national authorities in their efforts to stabilise and develop the country in the long term."

Solidarity with those worst hit by the humanitarian crisis

The new humanitarian aid office will ensure sound local management of the EUR 19 million allocated for humanitarian purposes in 2008 and the smooth operation of the projects funded following the crises that affected Haiti last year, in particular hurricanes Gustav, Hanna and Ike. The new office in Haiti is the Commission's 39th humanitarian aid office worldwide.

The amount of humanitarian aid allocated to Haiti by the Commission since 1993 totals more than EUR 83 million. These funds have helped Haiti cope with humanitarian challenges and fund disaster-preparedness projects

A long-term commitment to sustainable development

The European Commission is one of the main donors in Haiti and plans to make available EUR 291 million for the 10th EDF (2008-2013). These resources will be used to fund programmes and projects chiefly in the governance and road infrastructure sectors.

National Road 6, linking Cap Haitien, the country's second-largest city, to the Dominican border, has just been upgraded thanks to European funding. The first section of National Road 3 between Port-au-Prince and Mirebalais is set for completion in July.