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AAFA Launches Industry Haiti Reconstruction Task Force

Arlington, VA – In an effort to support and provide long-term assistance to the people of Haiti, the American Apparel & Footwear Association (AAFA) today announced it has created the Haiti-AAFA Recovery and Reconstruction Team (HARRT) a member-led task force that will provide key apparel, footwear, and textile industry insight as relief operations continue and reconstruction planning begins in earthquake-stricken Haiti.

“As we support the relief work continuing on the ground in Haiti, it is important for the apparel and footwear industry to begin reconstruction activities,” said AAFA President and CEO Kevin M. Burke. “Because apparel production is one of Haiti’s most prominent industries, these sectors will play a critical role in Haiti’s recovery. I am pleased so many AAFA members have stepped up through charitable contributions and active leadership on this much-needed task force. Haiti will soon be on its way to full recovery.”

“While we are optimistic about Haiti’s full recovery, we understand that our work must be diligent and focused,” said HARRT Steering Committee Co-Chairman Rick Helfenbein, President of TellaS Ltd., the USA division of Luen Thai. “The U.S. apparel industry has a long partnership with Haiti and is ready to be a cornerstone of Haiti reconstruction.”

“Before the earthquake, Haiti experienced several years of incredible growth in its apparel and textile industry,” said HARRT Steering Committee Co-Chairman Jerry Cook, Senior Vice President of Government and Trade, Hanesbrands, Inc. “We must do everything we can to help rebuild this industry that has positively contributed to Haiti’s economy. We have our work cut out for us as we get started making sure growth is sustainable and continues into the future.”

HARRT’s mission is to ensure that the apparel and footwear industry plays a responsible and proactive role in Haiti’s overall recovery. In the coming weeks, HARRT will continue seeking out apparel and footwear producers who are active in Haiti and learn more about their specific and evolving needs. Through core objectives, HARRT will assist the Haitian apparel and footwear industry in addressing infrastructure issues, factory capacity levels, workforce training, responsible production, and sourcing patterns, among many other important concerns. Task force members will also educate U.S. government officials about industry needs as it works to assist Haiti through reconstruction.

If your apparel company is interested in joining HARRT or learning more about the task force, please contact AAFA Executive Vice President [Stephen Lamar](#) at (703) 797-9041.

Background

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. The apparel industry is the single largest sector of the Haitian economy. Haiti is the seventeenth largest supplier of apparel to the United States. For the first ten months of 2009, Haiti exported more than \$424 million worth of apparel to the United States, up 22% from the same period in 2008.

AAFA has been a strong advocate of bringing economic opportunity to Haiti by supporting Congressional approval of the, *Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act (CBTPA)* and the *Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Engagement Acts of 2006 (HOPE Act)* and 2008 (HOPE II).

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The American Apparel & Footwear Association (AAFA) is the national trade association representing apparel, footwear and other sewn products companies, and their suppliers, which compete in the global market. AAFA's mission is to promote and enhance its members' competitiveness, productivity and profitability in the global market by minimizing regulatory, commercial, political, and trade restraints.