

Patterson Inspects Pre-fabricated Office gift ready for shipping to Haitian President

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Special Representative on Haiti, Mr P.J. Patterson, inspected a two-storey pre-fabricated, modular office building on the compound of Ashtrom Jamaica Limited on Wednesday July 7, to be shipped to Haiti as a gift from a consortium of Caribbean business organizations.

The building was promised to Haiti's President Preval to be utilized as a temporary office structure. The promise was made on behalf of Ashtrom when Mr Patterson led a team from his office on a one-day mission to Haiti.

Following his inspection of the building, the CARICOM Representative thanked the companies and described the project as a "magnificent gesture in response to the disaster which the Haitian people have experienced." He said the project had demonstrated a clear sign that individual companies and organizations were not engaged in competition but in cooperation. This response, he said, was a signal to the rest of the private sector not only in Jamaica but the wider Caribbean regarding what can be achieved through cooperation.

Mr Patterson said that the President of Haiti had been, since the earthquake, operating out of a building that previously housed a police station. He said that the offer of the Ashtrom building during his visit in April was accepted gratefully and without hesitation. And he was delighted that the companies were able to make good on the offer in a timely way.

Ashtrom Jamaica Limited was responsible for constructing the modular building while Kingston Logistics Centre, Tank Weld Metals and Jamaica Freight and Shipping Company are responsible for transporting it to Haiti, which the companies affirmed that they were now ready to do.

Vice President of Ashtrom, Rami Subocki explained that the construction of the building took approximately six weeks while its erection is expected to take approximately three to four days. The Ashtrom Vice President said that the building is part of his company's well established modular system designed and implemented successfully in Jamaica. He added that the building was designed and constructed in accordance with the International Building Code to withstand the impact of natural disasters such as earthquakes, and hurricanes. The Vice President expressed his company's pride to be a part of the CARICOM team that is prepared to help the people of Haiti.

Similar sentiments were expressed by Chris Bicknell, Group CEO of Tank Weld Metals and Charles Johnston, of Jamaica Freight and Shipping and Miki Cohen, Kingston Logistics. Mr Johnson said that a representative of his company would accompany the building to Haiti. He said that he hoped that the Haitians were ready to accept the building as they are ready for immediate delivery.

Each of the executives explained that they were well prepared and poised to provide similar services to Haiti as soon as they were given the necessary clearance by the government of that country.

Mr Patterson said that the gift was well timed and appreciated as there was an acute need for public shelter in Haiti at this time. He added that proposals for the erection of similar structures have already been submitted to the Haitian authorities, which was an indication that there were companies in the Caribbean Community prepared to make such facilities available in the shortest possible time. "We are awaiting some indication from the Haitian authorities as to how to proceed and the moment we get the signal we are ready to go," Mr Patterson said.

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