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## Hundreds Of Investors In Haiti For Two-Day Forum

Tuesday, November 29, 2011

Miami Herald

By Jacqueline Charles

Haiti backers heralded some good news Monday for the earthquake ravaged Haiti: 44 miles of newly asphalted road, a new 605-acre industrial park in the north that will attract 65,000 jobs and a marquee hotel brand.

"This is a very special day. It is truly a day of change," Luis Alberto Moreno, the head of the Inter-American Development Bank said Monday.

The bank, which invests hundreds of millions of dollars in Haiti, is sponsoring a two-day investment forum in Port-au-Prince beginning Tuesday. So far, 1,000 people have registered, 500 of them business people from 29 countries.

As attendees began pouring into the country and taking over every available hotel room, the IDB, President Michel Martelly, Prime Minister Garry Conille and former U.S. President Bill Clinton spent the day spreading the news in back-to-back events across the country.

Early Monday, Moreno and Martelly inaugurated a newly rehabilitated Route National 1, the country's main road that connects the capital in the south to Cap-Haitien in the north. The symbolic ribbon-cutting culminated three years of construction by the Dominican road building firm Estrella.

Later they joined Clinton and Conille in laying the first stone of the new industrial park, an investment worth more than \$300 million. The park's first tenants include one of Korea's biggest clothing manufactures, Sae-A, which will eventually employ 20,000 people. About 5,000 new houses will surround the area, courtesy of the IDB and U.S. Agency for International Development.

"This is the kind of change we want," Martelly said. "This is what they call durable development."

But that development Clinton, reminded Haitian authorities and donors, has come about because Haitians and donors worked together.

"If people keep working together, we can give you the future you deserve," he said.

And that future, will soon include the Marriott name. The hotel announced late in the afternoon that it will open its first full-fledged Marriott hotel in Haiti in two years. The \$45 million 173-room hotel is a partnership with telecom giant,

Digicel.

"Today is Bob the Builder day in Haiti," Denis O'Brien, the owner of Digicel said, referring to the projects' previously announced and his coming hotel. "By doing this hotel, we hope that this is going to be a message to other foreign direct investors, 'Come on in.'"

Arnie Sorenson, president and chief operating officer for Marriott International, said the earthquake "opened our eyes" to Haiti.

"We are not here saying we are doing this because of good social work. That is obviously an extra special feature because of where Haiti is at," Sorenson said. "It needs to continue to develop, stabilize after the earthquake, continue to bring in foreign direct investment and have commerce, and tell people it's a safe place to invest. Our being involved helps all of those things."