

A vision for equitable growth

By NORMA POWELL

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The Association of Industries of Haiti (ADIH), which was founded more than 30 years ago, is a non-profit association that brings together Haitian industrial enterprises. Its mission is to enhance, promote and support the development of the industrial sector on the basis of its competitive advantages and specialisation in areas of expertise. It works actively to promote among its members a climate of lasting social peace and high work productivity, as well as policies and practices to protect and preserve the environment. Its primary objective is to make Haiti an important and modern industrial base in the Caribbean and its daily mission to promote the dynamism of the country’s industries and to support them through advocacy and activities that contribute to placing economic matters on the political agenda.

Haiti is one of the most densely populated islands in the Caribbean, and it possesses natural assets that give it a significant comparative advantage, inter alia: a large, peaceful and competitive labour force, untapped mineral resources, an ideal geographic location and, in particular, an educated diaspora constituting an invaluable pool of wealth. The latter is keen on contributing to the country, once the visibility and predictability of the political and social environment are guaranteed and infrastructure and legal frameworks are put in place. Today, our country receives favourable consideration and assistance from numerous States in the Americas, as well as the European Union

and other countries in Asia. The ADIH, which has historically proven to be an active partner in industrial development, intends to pursue, support and expand this movement and to take advantage of this exceptionally favourable period, to contribute to building a sound and prosperous economy that will generate sufficient wealth to enable the equitable distribution of the proceeds of growth.

In this context, the industrial sector has a key role to play in economic growth. Indeed, while Haitian industry has remained relatively competitive as a result of cheap labour, the challenge is now to gradually but completely move its assets toward added value and sustainable competitive advantage, with salary constituting just one element of this competitiveness.

Our association comprises approximately one hundred members involved in local industry, which consists of two main branches: on the one hand, textile assembly for export, and, on the other hand, the production of consumer goods for the local market, which enjoys a high demand and will gradually increase its share in relation to imports.

The recovery of the assembly industry has been at the forefront of our actions, and the ADIH played a key role in obtaining American laws HOPE in 2006, HOPE II in 2008 and HELP, following the earthquake, in 2011. Consequently, in 2006, Haiti re-emerged as a viable manufacturing country for American clothing brands and retailers. This new direction led to an increase in employment in the clothing sector in Haiti from 12,000 to over 25,000 before the earthquake – owing to special conditions favouring the Haitian textile sector for exports to the United States of America. Today, with the extension of tariff preferences to 2020, Haiti represents a very attractive opportunity for the assembly of textile products, which will be able to enter the United States free of customs duty.

Food production has been a major source of concern since the food crisis that erupted in 2008 and the natural disasters that occurred in 2010, as well as in 2012 with Tropical Storm Sandy. Paradoxically, this has served to stimulate the resurgence of our agriculture – food production naturally, but also niche products geared toward the processing industry and exports; fruits and vegetables, coffee and cocoa, mangoes, essential oils, etc.

Haiti imports food products, machinery and equipment, fuel, household items, etc, to the tune of



almost three billion dollars. Significant opportunities exist in terms of processing and packaging of agricultural produce (fruits, vegetables and grains), livestock rearing and associated industries (dairy, butchery and packaging).

The figures highlight the potential existing in a growth market for industrial investments as a substitute for imports. Thus, we are keen to encourage partnerships with regional companies that can take our constraints into consideration and develop our production by contributing their experience. The ADIH is available to explore with them the opportunities for partnerships or joint ventures, for installation and expansion.

A number of opportunities also exist in the tourism sector. Improved infrastructure, for which we have fought tirelessly, will, we hope, support the restructuring of this industry, based on a model that is original and specific to our country.

Economic and business development and the creation of an enabling environment are the result of joint efforts by the private and public sectors. Our primary mission is to protect local industries and contribute to their development and modernisation, based on the needs of local and foreign markets. This goes hand in hand with a social approach, a dialogue-based approach and the objective of contributing to the development of the economic sector, while respecting workers' rights and obligations. In this regard, the ADIH is proud to collaborate with State institutions such as the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, and the Tripartite Commission for the Implementation of the HOPE Law (CTMO-HOPE), on projects that would enhance the promotion of social dialogue in assembly companies, and the development of modern labour laws that would assist in improving the competitiveness of Haitian firms in relation to those of the countries in the region.

The ADIH has also led employers in drafting

the new Labour Code in partnership with the Haitian Government and the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

The ADIH is a statutory member of the following State institutions:

- Centre de Facilitation des Investissements (Center for the Facilitation of Investments – CFI), headed by the Minister of Trade and Industry;
- Conseil National des Zones Franches (National Free Zones Council – CNZF), headed by the Minister of Trade and Industry;
- Société Nationale des Parcs Industriels (National Industrial Parks Company – SONAPI), headed by the Minister of the Economy and Finance;
- Conseil de Développement Economique et Social (Council for Economic and Social Development – CDES), headed by the Prime Minister.

Through its actions, the ADIH promotes sustainable human development using an economic, political and social system based on individual freedoms, initiative, motivation, opportunity and accountability. It shares and fosters among its members, inter alia, the exchange of relevant information on the economy, prevailing ideas in the industrial sector, legislative developments affecting the business world, and regional and international economic developments impacting on the national economy.

Supporting the sector, sharing our vision of economic and social development, strengthening and placing economic matters on the agenda – such are the key elements of our mission. We wish to meet this growth with a stimulating and proactive associative framework, combining industrial and business dynamics with a respectful and modern socioeconomic approach. And it is our wish that this growth is accompanied by fruitful business partnerships with our friends in the Caribbean region. Enjoy our beautiful country of Haiti!

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Haitian manufacturing: from top to bottle



Photography courtesy of ADIH